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WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

MINISTER OF RELIGION

By JOHN WHITE CHADWICK

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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M. R.

Dedicated

To those men and women of the present
time who are endeavoring
in the spirit of
WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING
to unite all social classes, sects, and nations in
the bonds of mutual understanding,
fraternal sympathy, and
sincere good-will

193642

PREFACE

I HAVE been impelled to write a new life of Channing by several motives, two of which have a somewhat contradictory appearance, one of them being the deeper interest in Channing which has of late been manifested in quarters where there had been imperfect knowledge of his qualities, too little sympathy with his spirit, and the other the disproportion which, I thought, existed between the significance of his thought and message and their limited appreciation. The deeper interest seemed to invite a fresh delineation; the inadequate appreciation to lay on me a clear command. Moreover, even among those who have had the special care of Channing's name and fame, I had found the younger generations more ignorant of him and more indifferent to him than I thought was right, and I desired to communicate to them something of the enthusiasm and delight which for many years had animated my own breast. I was encouraged to make the attempt by the cordial reception accorded to my "Theodore Parker,"

which was published two years since. I knew without warning that to write Channing's life was a very different thing from writing Parker's, — as different as carving a statue from painting a picture, so much warmth and color were there in Parker's experience and personality, so little in the older and the greater man's; but I was persuaded that there were aspects of Channing's life that assured to any faithful presentation of it a peculiar and dramatic interest, and these I have endeavored to make plain. There has been for me additional instigation in my sense that while on certain lines the thought and purpose of our time are approximating Channing's, and should enjoy a livelier conscious sympathy with him, on other lines they are departing from him to their hurt and shame, and making themselves amenable to his deprecation and rebuke. Simultaneously I have felt that Channing's best work, his surest prophecy, was more upon the social side than on the theological, and I have thought I could not do the present time a better service than to confront it with his lofty spirit and his serious aims.

In the way of sources, I need hardly say that my principal indebtedness has been to Channing's "Works" (which, as published by the American Unitarian Association, contain in one volume the

six originally published and "The Perfect Life") and the "Memoir" of 1848, which, however defective its arrangement, is remarkable for its full disclosure of Channing's mind in his own words. Two misfortunes have attended my work: the burning of a car in southern California which contained nearly all of Dr. Channing's manuscripts and letters, and the death of his son, William Francis Channing, only a little while before I began the collection of my material. His affectionate and reverent memory would have been an inestimable service, and its loss to me I account much greater than that of Channing's manuscripts, which, I am persuaded, had ample representation in the "Memoir" and "Works." Some of the most precious escaped the general destruction; and of these two of the most important, the Baltimore Sermon and that on Self-Denial, I now proudly call my own. I have had a full line of Channing's publications in their original pamphlet forms, which have seemed to bring me into closer touch with him than the books in which, with few exceptions, they were ultimately incorporated. Much has been written about Channing; little of the best has, I trust, escaped my attention. The hundredth anniversary of his birth was particularly fertile in reminiscences and appreciations. But I have

valued quite as much, or more, the side glances of many biographies of his contemporaries, and other books illustrative of his time. It was at one time my purpose to make and print a list of the books and articles which had served me in various degrees, but I found that, while it would contain several hundred titles, to make it complete would be very difficult. My footnotes and other references will, in part, make good the lack of such a list.

One of the happiest fortunes of my life has been an affectionate relation with some of the early leaders who knew Channing well, — Dewey, Furness, Bartol, Bellows, Hedge, — and many things which they told me I have not forgotten. I have had much direct help from others, from so many that I cannot name them all; but some expression of my gratitude there must be to Dr. Channing's granddaughter, Mrs. Grace Ellery Channing-Stetson, to whom I am much indebted, and to my friend William Channing Gannett, whom little that throws light on Channing has escaped. For the index — a laborious task, which for me would have been harder than to write the book — I am indebted to my wife; also for much help in the proofreading, to say nothing of her good advice at many doubtful points, and her continuous encouragement.

It is sixty years to-day since Channing died. So long dead, almost his lifetime, he yet speaks to many minds and hearts. If what I have written extends the sphere of his influence ever so little, I shall be glad. If this satisfaction is denied me, I shall still have had for two years such discourse with the spirit of this great and good man as has been to me a holy contemplation, to be prized hereafter among the happiest fortunes of my life.

J. W. C.

October 2, 1902.

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The frontispiece portrait of William Ellery Channing is from the original painting (1839) by S. Gambardella, owned by Miss Elizabeth P. Channing of Milton.

The portrait at page 212 is from the painting (1811) by Washington Allston, at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

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CHRONOLOGY

1780.	April 7. Born in Newport, R. I.
1780.	May 28. Baptized by Dr. Ezra Stiles.
1792.	Goes to New London, Conn., to study with his uncle, Henry Channing.
1792.	September 21. His father dies.
1794.	Enters Harvard College.
1798.	Is graduated from Harvard.
1798.	Goes as tutor to Richmond.
1800.	Returns to Newport.
1802.	Studies theology in Cambridge.
1803.	June 1. Ordained and installed Minister of the Federal Street Society.
1809.	New church is built.
1810.	His brother Francis dies and (May 25) his nephew, William Henry Channing, is born.
1812.	Preaches anti-war sermon.
1814.	Preaches at King's Chapel on Fall of Napoleon Bonaparte.
1814.	Is married to his cousin, Ruth Gibbs.
1815.	Liberal Christians assailed, and Channing answers assaults with letters to Thacher and Worcester. Most signal year of "Unitarian Controversy."
1816.	Sermon upon War before Congregational ministers of Massachusetts.
1819.	Preaches "Baltimore Sermon" at ordination of Jared Sparks.
1820.	Founds Berry Street Conference.
1821.	Delivers Dudleian Lecture at Harvard College.
1822.	Goes to Europe for health in May.

1823.	Returns from Europe in August.
1824.	Ezra Stiles Gannett becomes his colleague, Channing preaching his ordination sermon.
1825.	American Unitarian Association organized.
1825–30.	Writes articles on Milton, Fénelon, and Napoleon.
1826.	Preaches sermon at dedication Second Unitarian Congregational Church, New York.
1828.	Preaches "Likeness to God" at ordination of Frederick A. Farley, in Providence, R. I.
1830.	May 26. Preaches "Spiritual Freedom": annual Election Sermon.
1830.	Publishes "Discourses, Reviews, and Miscellanies."
1830.	Goes to West Indies in November.
1831.	January 1. First number of Garrison's "Liberator" appears.
1831.	Channing returns from West Indies in May.
1832.	Publishes second volume : eleven sermons.
1834.	May 25. His mother, Lucy Ellery Channing, dies.
1835.	Publishes "Slavery" soon after pro-slavery mob.
1835.	Preaches and publishes sermon upon War.
1836.	Publishes "The Abolitionists," an open letter to James G. Birney.
1837.	Writes open letter to Henry Clay on Annexation of Texas.
1837.	Takes leading part in Faneuil Hall meeting, called to consider murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy.
1838.	Delivers and publishes "Lecture upon War."
1838.	Heads petition for release of Abner Kneeland.
1838.	Delivers "Self-Culture" lecture.
1838.	July 15. Emerson's Divinity School Address.
1839.	"Remarks on Slavery Question" : an open letter to Jonathan Phillips criticising Henry Clay.
1840.	Delivers and publishes "Elevation of the Laboring Classes" lectures.
1840.	Publishes "Emancipation."
1841.	May 19. Theodore Parker's South Boston sermon.

1841. May 30. Channing preaches sermon, "The Church," in Philadelphia.

1841. Works published in five volumes; sixth in 1843.

1842. April 7. His sixty-second birthday. Preaches for the last time at Federal Street.

1842. Publishes "Duty of the Free States," in two parts.

1842. August 1. Delivers "Lenox Address" on eighth anniversary of West India emancipation.

1842. October 2. Channing dies at Bennington, Vt.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING

CHAPTER I

THE NEWPORT BOY

CHANNING might well thank God, as he did with much fervor, that he was born in Rhode Island. He was speaking of the beautiful island of that name on which Newport is here built compactly together and there loosely spread out, but he had reason to be further grateful for the good fortune of being born in a State consecrated by memories of Roger Williams and Samuel Gorton to those principles of religious liberty which were the most animating principles of his life. Williams's doctrine of "soul liberty" was a splendid legacy, not only to the particular denomination from which he passed, after brief tarrying, to a more open fellowship, but to "a free church in a free state" in its now continental breadth. Gorton's service, though less conspicuous, was perhaps more consistent in its entire expression than Williams's impulsive and erratic course. Even those historians[1]

[1] John Fiske and Charles Francis Adams. But see an excellent monograph by Lewis G. Janes, *Samuell Gorton: A Forgotten Founder of our Liberties; First Settler of Warwick, R. I.* Providence: Preston & Rounds, 1896.

who should have done him full justice have done him less than that, but many who have done better than Gorton have fared worse with those who are the arbiters of fame.

The "beautiful island" of Channing's devout admiration had its peculiar associations with religious liberty, its first settlers having been Anne Hutchinson and the little company who went outside the camp with her, sharing her honorable reproach. During Channing's boyhood the natural beauty was not so diversified as it has been of late by the lordly pleasure houses of a summer population; and though Newport had even then its social pride, it was humility compared with the lavish ostentation with which wealth and fashion now disport themselves along the brilliant avenues and in the palatial villas which express and flatter the self-importance of the newly rich. The cliffs and beaches are less purely natural than they were when young Channing revelled in their beauty, but man's control stops with the ocean's edge. Unchanged in its sublimity of calm or storm, that gleams and glooms to-day as then, yet to few of the gay throng which drifts seaward on the tidal heat of summer does it speak the language which it had for Channing's youth and for his latest years. In one respect, Newport and the island round about were never less beautiful than at the time of Channing's birth. The British occupation had made havoc everywhere, and especially it had denuded the landscape of the woods and trees

which had been its special pride. Every growing thing that promised firewood the British had cut down, so that in the winter before Channing's birth a cord of such wood sold for $20; in good money, I suppose, for in the depreciated currency of the time that would be too little rather than too much.

The light of poetry, adventure, and romance lies warm on the New England seaport towns; on few, if any, quite so pleasantly as on Newport. The town attracted the most fond regards of Curtis in his "lotus-eating" days, and from the vantage of his Easy Chair his eye took in its Revolutionary episodes, bright with the red English uniforms and the white and gold of our gay French allies; attractive with the tender fortunes of the Robinson sisters, those Quaker beauties whose chariot set a little world on fire, and distinguished by the presence of Washington and Rochambeau walking up the Long Wharf together to their joint reception in the town. In his "Oldport Days" Colonel Higginson has harvested more intimate associations, the growth of a protracted residence, out of his treasures bringing things new and old of rival worth. Only to the touchstone that he brought to the old streets and wharves and the vessels rotting at the piers would these things have yielded up their mysteries. Many have lived long with them and never guessed what tales they had to tell.

Before the Revolution the town enjoyed com-

mercial prominence, and already was a watering-place much prized by Southern planters, who, before their pleasure, had, perhaps, first their business on the wharves, where there were slaves from Africa for such as cared to purchase them for rum or cash. One of the cages in which these slaves were huddled was a visible testimony a short time since, if it is not so still. Three hundred Jewish families in the town were proof of the commercial tone. Many of these had been landed in Newport by the Lisbon earthquake, among them Lopez, a Portuguese Jew, who owned eighty-eight square-riggers, sailing in his foreign trade. No wonder the town boasted bigger mail-bags than New York! Its population in 1774 was 9000, but it fell off 4000 the next year, and must have continued falling off as the war for independence dragged its slow length along. If English and French occupation and the annual Southern visitation did not improve the morals of the town, these circumstances touched its manners to a finer grace, while the seafaring and sailor life of the townfolk made swearing, drinking, and licentiousness of speech and manners so abound as to give the town what was esteemed by many its most characteristic note.

Of hardly any period of Newport's earlier history have we more vivid information than of that which, from our immediate point of view, had for its main incident Dr. Channing's birth. The information is furnished by the journal of the Baron

du Bourg and the letters of Count Rochambeau,[1] whose impression of the well-to-do Newporters was that they spent all their time at table. Lafayette had left France for America March 6, 1780, with the good news of an intended fleet and army for the support of the overworn and sometimes despairing revolutionists, and, arriving April 27, he was still on the high seas when William Ellery Channing was born April 7, the third of ten children, nine of whom reached maturity and three[2] attained

[1] See also the diary of Ezra Stiles, who, just after Channing's birth, made a pastoral visit to his Newport flock, which had not yet formally surrendered him to Yale College. The term of his visit included "the dark day," which he describes minutely, and with more of scientific than of superstitious inclination. His description of the devastated town and desecrated church is full of interest. He preached two Sundays, and on the afternoon of the second, May 28th, he baptized the infant son of his friends, William and Lucy Channing.

[2] William Ellery; Walter, a much-valued Boston physician of literary and æsthetic tastes, born 1786; Edward Tyrrel, Harvard Professor of Rhetoric, who exerted a profound influence on a generation of writers, sometime editor and often contributor to the *North American Review*, born 1790. An older brother, Francis, who graduated from Harvard in 1794 and died in 1810, was esteemed by his brothers and friends as the most gifted of the family. William Henry Channing, only son of Francis, published in 1848 the biography of Dr. Channing, which is my richest mine. His own biography, written by O. B. Frothingham, was published in 1886. Born in 1810, he died in 1884. His cousin, "Ellery Channing" (William Ellery), of Concord, a poet of some perfect poems, many noble passages, and a few immortal lines, born 1818, died 1901, was son of Dr. Walter Channing. He was Thoreau's intimate friend and biographer. Dr. W. E. Channing's son, William Francis, recently dead, was a man of admirable parts, a distinguished inventor and eager social reformer. His daughter Eva is well known in Boston on educational and other lines. His daughter Grace Ellery Channing-Stetson is a

distinguished reputation. I have seen the record of William's birth, made by his father with quick haste in the family Bible,[1] with no possible prescience that the name he wrote would be

"Sweeter than honey to the lips of men."

The child came of good stock on both sides of the house, being allied on the maternal side with the Cabots, Lees, Jacksons, Lowells; on the paternal with the Gibbs, Ellery, Dana, and Allston families, "the glories of whose blood and state" are not to be despised. The father, William Channing, was the son of John Channing, a Newport merchant, whose fortunes, generally prosperous, at last came to grief. John married the widow Robinson, whose maiden name was Mary Chaloner, and she, after his death, kept a little shop for the maintenance of her family, between one customer and another her bright needles knitting up "the ravelled sleave of care," her old-fashioned dignity and courtesy combining with her cheerful energy to win for her a sincere, if sometimes amused, respect. Her husband's father was another

poet who has written some very beautiful things. Edward Channing, the present historian and Harvard professor, born 1856, is the youngest son of Ellery Channing, the Concord poet, who married a sister of Margaret Fuller. But I must arbitrarily break off the lengthening roll at the name of Elizabeth P. Channing, a thoughtful essayist, daughter of the Rev. George Channing, who was Dr. Channing's youngest brother except Edward, and outlived the one hundredth anniversary of the doctor's birth.

[1] Some twenty years since, when I saw it, it was in the possession of Professor W. C. Russell, a nephew of Dr. Channing, at the time acting president of Cornell University.

John Channing, the first American Channing known to the genealogists, who came from Dorsetshire, Eng., in 1711. On the same vessel with him came Mary Antram. Either they were mutually pledged when they set out, or the long voyage afforded such conditions for a successful courtship as could hardly be escaped. It is certain that they were married soon after their arrival in Boston.

William Channing, Dr. Channing's father, was born in Newport, June 11, 1751, and graduated from Princeton College, N. J., in 1769. Reading law in Providence, he began its practice in Newport in 1771, and two years later married Lucy Ellery.[1] With much professional ability, his inclination to politics may have done something to qualify his success. A large family had the same effect, and, at his death in 1793, he had done little towards amassing a fortune, or even a competency. Yet he was an official pluralist, being at the same time attorney-general of the State and United States district attorney. His son's recollections of him were among the pleasantest of his early years. He was so much attached to Princeton, that he thought to send William there, and it is interesting to imagine what a difference for him and many others the hyper-orthodox influences would have made. His character was sincerely

[1] At the time of William's birth, the house occupied by his parents was that which is now 24 School Street, and serves the uses of a Home for Friendless Children. There is a good picture of it in Charles T. Brooks's *Channing: A Centennial Memory.*

religious, and he was devoted to the interests of the local Congregational church. He was particularly active in restoring its meeting-house, which the British troops had occupied and wantonly defaced, to the uses of public worship. His religious sentiments were marked by a liberality that was in some degree prophetic of his son's liberal preëminence. His relations with Dr. Ezra Stiles, at one time his minister, contributed to his mental breadth. Newport was much given to profanity, but the father had for this habit a particular abhorrence. "I recollect with gratitude," says William, "the impression he made on my own mind. I owed it to him, that, though living in the atmosphere of this vice, no profane word ever passed my lips." Genial, though dignified and impressive, his style and manner were described as "mellifluous" by a professional friend. William nevertheless recalled a burst of indignation so vehement as to drive him from the court-house in a spasm of fear. He was a gentle boy, and unused to seeing his father in his "Ercles' vein." A happier experience was his being present, May 29, 1790, at the Rhode Island convention, which adopted the national Constitution of 1787. He never forgot the enthusiasm of the moment, nor his father's happiness in the event.[1] The elder

[1] It should be remembered that Rhode Island was so tardy in her adoption of the Constitution that she came near to losing the distinction of being one of "the original thirteen." Vermont was close upon her heels.

Channing was warmly sympathetic with the earlier stages of the French Revolution, but by the execution of Louis XVI. his hopes were overclouded, not to reëmerge. The grandfather, following the local habit of his generation, had domestic slaves, and it was a grief to Dr. Channing's memory that his father had no sensibility to the evil done. These slaves were set free soon after the Revolutionary war, and Dr. Channing had the pleasure of remembering how kind his father was to them in their "bewildering freedom." One of the scanty pleasures of the boy's life was admission to his father's office when the choir gathered there to practise the Sunday hymns in which the father took great interest. He also held the faith of Bacon, that gardening is the purest of all pleasures. Not content with one garden, he had two, and in these he cultivated a great variety of plants and vegetables, the latter doing much to make his table liberal for his family and the friends to whom he extended a hospitality which was perhaps too generous for his means. For all the benignity of his face and voice, he was too observant of the traditional proprieties to have any real comradeship with his children, and his discipline, if less impulsive than the mother's, was not less severe.

The mother's father, William Ellery,[1] was a man of more engaging qualities. Born in 1727, he

[1] See Life by Edward Tyrrel Channing in Sparks's *American Biographies.*

made an early marriage with Ann Remington, of Cambridge, Mass., a woman who looked well to the ways of her house, and was cheerfully devoted to her husband's and her children's happiness. She died in 1764, while the older of the children were still young, and for more than fifty years her husband kept her memory green in reverent loneliness. In the first years of his married life his habits were convivial, but he at once mended them when he found that his wife had recorded in her almanac her tender gratitude for an evening he had spent at home. There could have been little virulence in a disease that could be cured by a remedy so simple, taken once for all. He wrote a brief autobiography which is remarkable for its blended self-esteem and careful modesty. Looking back over his life, he found that he had been "a dabbler" when he might have been a skilful physician or attorney. He wrote, —

> I have been a clerk of a court, a quack lawyer, a member of Congress, one of the lords of the admiralty, a judge, a loan officer, and finally a collector of the customs, and thus, not without many difficulties, but as honestly, thank God, as most men, I have got through the journey of a varied and sometimes anxious life.

His commercial prospects were ruined by the embarrassments growing out of British trade restrictions. In 1770 he began the practice of the law, and simultaneously he became one of the most ardent of the "Sons of Liberty," and of "those active spirits who were preparing themselves and

the people for a separation from the mother country." So distinguished was the part he played upon this memorable scene, that he was sent, with Stephen Hopkins, of more venerable fame, to represent Rhode Island in the Congress which, on July 2, 1776, resolved upon the independence of the colonies, and two days later gave the reasons for their actions in a declaration, which, after a century and more of good repute, has recently excited the suspicions of our progressive politicians and divines. Eight years in Congress secured him a delightful intimacy with influential men, and his wit and raillery endeared him to them and many others as a companion to be greatly prized. Yet there seems to be a defect of humor in some of the comments that he makes on his own character. For example, —

> His very kindness and gentleness had none of the inertness of mere good temper, but were animated by an active cherished principle of love, which discriminated its objects, and was all alive for the happiness of others.

All this may have been well deserved, but it would have come with better grace from some other person. So, too, the testimony to the honesty and fairness of his mind as the great distinction of his character, and its most satisfactory explanation. Yet these qualities were recognized by the grandson who bore his name as unquestionably real, and the correspondence of the two men, continued till past Channing's middle life, was

always valued by Channing as a means of better insight into the deep things of morals and religion. Mr. Ellery lived to be ninety-two years old, a venerated friend and citizen, dying in 1820 in the town where he was born.

His daughter, Lucy, Channing's mother, was a little woman, destined in this respect to set the seal of her physical character upon her son. Her face, as painted by Allston,[1] is also much like his, but with a difference, being hard and cold where his was mild and luminous. The engraver may have been unfaithful to the artist, or the artist to his subject. She made the most of her inches by her erect carriage and elastic motion. Her mind was quick and versatile, and her speech had a touch of Saxon simplicity and quaintness which made her formidable to pretenders and to evil-doers. The "rough nobleness" ascribed to her by her nephew, William Henry Channing, was, I infer, sometimes conspicuously rough. Hers was not, he says, a tranquil temperament, and to smooth its ruffled waters was an office to which her more placid husband was frequently called. "Don't trouble yourself, Lucy; I will make all smooth," was a familiar household note. Without his help and with the increasing care and worry that his death involved, her temper possibly took on a sharper edge. Whatever the necessary qualifications, she was a woman of the most generous impulses, and the most loving heart. Her son's trib-

[1] See Brooks's *Channing: A Centennial Memory.*

ute to her worth was written when he had made full proof of her goodness. She lived to see him past his fiftieth year, and attaining to the full measure of his power, though hardly to the consummation of his fame.

The most remarkable trait in my mother's character was the rectitude and simplicity of her mind. Perhaps I have never known her equal in this respect. She was true in thought, word, and life. She had the firmness to see the truth, to speak it, to act upon it. She was direct in judgment and conversation, and in my long intercourse with her I cannot recall one word or action betraying the slightest insincerity. She had keen insight into character. She was not to be imposed upon by others, and, what is rarer, she practised no imposition upon her own mind. She saw things, persons, events, as they were, and spoke of them by their right names. Her partialities did not blind her, even to her children. Her love was without illusion. She recognized, unerringly and with delight, fairness, honesty, genuine uprightness, and shrunk as by instinct from everything specious, the factitious in character, and plausible in manners.

It was a fortunate circumstance that the child who lived to bear this witness did not in one particular — the body's health — make good the Wordsworthian doctrine; he was not father of the man. There was no likeness of the chronic invalid of his majority in the glowing health and active motions of the boy, or in the young man's sprightly vigor and athletic grace. Had it been otherwise, his childhood would have been a greater burden

than he could bear. The boon of health was certainly an alleviation of that childhood's conscious weight. But he looked back upon no happy childhood from the summit of his later years. He said repeatedly that his childhood was the least happy period of his life, and that, as he had grown older, each year had been happier than the last. Possibly, and probably, there was some shadow falling backward here from the experience of his later prime. The sober fact was, however, sufficiently deplorable. He was not a happy boy because his parents, doing their duty by him in the most conscientious manner, were not affable and friendly with him, gave him a stony formalism when he craved spontaneous affection, were of the opinion that he should be seen and not heard, and that he should know his place. Then, too, there was the burden of the inherited theology and the cheerless piety of the New England Puritan early to solemnize his tremulous heart. Wholly believing what his elders only partly believed, how could the child be gay? Besides, his early schooling was of no pleasant kind. But the main fact at this stage of his development was that he was a young idealist, and "wanted better bread than could be made of wheat." He found it hard to meet the requirements of the parental rule, and those, more exigent, of his own sensitive conscience.

An aged relative remembered him in his third or fourth year as "the most splendid child she ever saw." Her memory made a pretty picture of

him standing beside his mother in her pew, with bright eyes and rosy cheeks, his light brown hair falling in curls over his ruffled collar and green velvet jacket, his eager gaze surveying the congregation with prophetic interest. The beauty of this picture is confirmed by many recollections. The mother's delicate health sent him to school at such an early age that an old colored servant often took him thither in his arms. His first teacher died, and he was taken to see her in her coffin, in the spirit of the hymn my grandmother taught me when my own years were few.

> O lovely appearance of death!
> What sight upon earth is so fair!
> Not all the gay pageants of earth
> Can with a dead body compare.

The impression which the boy got was so strong that the recollection of it always remained with him. So did that of his next mistress, as well it might, for the sceptre of her autocracy was a long stick or fishing-pole, with which she could keep in touch with the remotest scholar in the room. So agile was it that it seemed, at least to one imaginative boy, to be gifted with sight and hearing. It beset the delinquent behind and before, and there was no escape from it. One teacher did her best to spoil him by holding him up as a model, saying to the bad boys, "I wish in my heart you were like William Channing!" Later he went to Mr. Rogers, who kept a day and boarding-school of such repute that boys came to it from a

distance; some from the far South. Flogging was the regular discipline, and William seems to have suffered with the rest. The infliction outraged his sense of honor and helped to form in him a life-long sentiment of opposition to all corporal punishments of his fellow creatures, young or old. That the girls never got a "clapping" gave him his first sense of the peculiar sacredness of the gentler sex. Thus early was its loveliness borne in upon his mind, particularly by a little girl who used to take "French leave," and go dancing down the street, her hair upon the wind, her dainty hands making derisive gestures to the unhappy prisoners she had left behind. This story gains in interest when we discover that the little girl, when grown to womanhood, became Channing's wife.

So far was the boy from being precocious, that his teachers and schoolmates were nigh to thinking him a dunce. It taxes our credulity to think that he was ever "Bill" to any one, but the story goes that he was particularly slow at Latin, and that an assistant in his father's office said to him, "Come, Bill, they say you're a fool, but I'll soon teach you Latin;" and he did. Soon William was reading Virgil with delight, and he had more aptitude for mathematics than generally accompanies the literary mind. He was indifferent to superficial acquirements from his early years, liking to understand things thoroughly.

There was education out of school as well as on

the severely simple benches and behind the desks inscribed with proud initials and with many a mystic sign. Much of the home gardening was done by Mrs. Channing's boys, and she kept them well in hand, exacting careful work, and punishing neglect by cutting off the meals which ordinarily her enforced economies made scant enough, a feast impossible. The boys were forbidden to go in swimming except when personally conducted by some one who had reached years of discretion. Those who disobeyed were detected by the wet ends of their hair, and the fruit of each last disobedience was a good whipping. But they learned to swim, while William, an obedient boy, did not, and by that sign went sorrowing all his days. Regard for his mother's wishes withheld him more than fear of punishment, though he had an honest dread of that; even more as humiliating than as hurting horribly. Such was the importance attached to good eating in Newport that Channing said, "My first notion of glory was attached to an old black cook belonging to my uncle's household, whom I saw to be the most important personage in town." Calling with Miss Peabody upon a Newport friend, and pressed to eat a piece of her nice cake, he said, "Ah, Mrs. Clarke, its rich cake has been the ruin of Newport!" He suffered more from reaction from this social temper than from sympathy with it. Better fed, he would have been a better man. We read of an itinerant preacher that he had two forms of grace at table, suited to

different conditions, one beginning, "Bountiful Providence!" and the other, "For the least of all thy mercies." Doubtless it was a bountiful providence day when Washington came to New port and was dined by Channing's father.[1] So the small boy, then ten years old, saw the great hero plain,[2] and let us trust that he was stopped and spoken to. John Jay and other Federalists of great repute were also entertained under the Channing roof. But though the boy was much impressed by such visitors, and their significance for his later Federalism was appreciable, Dr. Stiles made a more profound because a more continuous impression. In the Newport sermon of 1836, when the church in which Hopkins had preached was dedicated to Unitarian faith and worship, Channing said of Dr. Stiles: —

To the influence of this distinguished man in the circle in which I was brought up, I may owe in part the indignation which I feel at every invasion of human rights. In my earliest years I regarded no human being with equal reverence. I have his form before me at this moment almost as distinctly as if I had seen him yesterday.

[1] The day was August 17, or thereabout, 1790. When Washington made his Eastern tour in 1789, Rhode Island was foreign territory, and Washington, as President, could not enter it. But after Rhode Island's tardy adoption of the Constitution he made the State a visit of courtesy, arriving at Newport August 17th.

[2] And did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak with you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!
Browning.

His playmates called him "The Peacemaker" and "The little Minister,"[1] but too much might easily be made of the latter designation and of his marshalling the family with an extemporized bell — a warming-pan — to occupy the seats he had arranged for a religious service and listen to his eloquent harangue. So many boys have been through these motions that no prophetic character can be ascribed to them. The lad's surroundings were in general such as to foster his religious sensibility. His father was the main pillar of the Second Congregational Church. His mother seconded his father's religious efforts with unflagging zeal. Once a week she opened the best parlor, hermetically sealed at other times, for a Scripture reading to which all the children were compulsorily invited, and at which they were expected to put on a solemn behavior — a difficult business when they were shivering in their chairs and Touser was playful with the carpet, which the irreverent wind bulged into little heaps. The father's aunt, a woman of feeble health and active piety, held meetings in her sick-room, presumably at such times as did not conflict with the home service. A more cheerful influence was that of Rachel De Gilder, a strong-minded woman in no doubtful sense, an upper servant in the house. She wore her piety with a difference from the common habit of the time that recommended it to the thoughtful

[1] There is a mythical embroidery of this legend to the effect that he was also called "William the Silent."

boy. His gratitude to her through her long life was such that we might easily believe him conscious of tracing back into her faithful heart some of the sources of that happy faith which was the inspiration of his maturest service to mankind.

When but a mere child he was, he tells us, "quite a theologian," though he hated to hear his grandfather Ellery and others "chopping logic after the controversial manner of the time." He remembered the general tone of religion in Newport as exerting an unhappy influence on his youthful mind; and, indeed, it was a questionable environment which united uncircumscribed profanity and the Assembly's Catechism in about equal parts. But if there were influences that were doubtful or distinctly bad, there were others that were distinctly good, besides those already named, one of which, that of Dr. Stiles, requires fresh emphasis. The doctor had left Newport in 1778 to assume the presidency of Yale. But it would seem that his returns to Newport were not infrequent, and that a high value was set on them. His cordial relations with Benjamin Franklin attested at once his interest in scientific matters and his religious liberality. Dr. Channing wrote in 1836: —

> I can well remember how the name of Dr. Stiles was cherished among his parishioners, after years of separation. His visit to this place was to many a festival. When little more than a child, I was present at some of his private meetings with the more religious part of

his former congregation, and I recollect how I was moved by the tears and expressive looks with which his affectionate exhortations were received. In his faith, he was what was called a moderate Calvinist; but his heart was of no sect. He carried into his religion the spirit of liberty, which then stirred the whole country. Intolerance, church tyranny, in all its forms, he abhorred. He respected the right of private judgment, where others would have thought themselves authorized to restrain it. . . . His friendships were confined to no parties. He desired to heal the wounds of the divided church of Christ, not by a common creed, but by the spirit of love. He wished to break every yoke, civil and ecclesiastical.[1]

The more important of Channing's recollections of Dr. Samuel Hopkins are those touching the relations of the two men in the younger's early manhood. Those touching his first impressions were much less favorable. But the slightest contact between two religious leaders who, differing widely, had still much in common, is too precious to be overlooked. After Jonathan Edwards, with whom Hopkins enjoyed an affectionate intimacy, no one brought to New England Calvinism a more intellectual and spiritual interpretation. Some forty years ago Mrs. Stowe's "Minister's Wooing" re-

[1] I have in my possession a number of his manuscript sermons given to me by his great-grandson, Rev. William C. Gannett, and I do not seem to find in them the qualities which Dr. Channing found inherent in the man, which only shows how relative impressions are. But they are less oppressively solemn than a number by his father, Rev. Isaac Stiles, which I also have in MS., the collection bearing his own label, "Chiefly on Death."

newed the popular interest in his character and thought, with some violence to the facts affecting his domestic life.[1] It has been his too exclusively known opinion that "we should be willing to be damned for the glory of God." The fact that he was actually and very practically willing to be, and was, damned by many Newport gentlemen and traders, for his interference with their business of slave-catching and owning, has had scanter recognition. Of his earlier and less favorable impressions of this remarkable man Dr. Channing wrote:

My recollections of Dr. Hopkins go back to my earliest years. As the Second Congregational Church was closed in my childhood, in consequence of Dr. Stiles's removal to New Haven, my father was accustomed to attend on the ministry of Dr. Hopkins. Perhaps he was the first minister I heard, but I heard him with no profit. His manner, which was singularly unattractive, could not win a child's attention; and the circumstances attending the service were repulsive. The church had been much injured by the British during their occupation of the town, and the congregation were too poor to repair it. It had a desolate look, and in winter the rattling of the windows made an impression which time has not worn out. It was literally "as cold as a barn," and some of the most painful sensations of my childhood were experienced in that comfortless building.

Only a stretch of gardens lay between the Channing house and the Hopkins parsonage, with its

[1] See Professor Williston Walker's admirable account of Hopkins in his *Ten New England Leaders;* also his *History of the Congregational Churches of the United States.*

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gambrel roof, under which the doctor had his study, and there of an early winter morning he was seen by Channing working away by candle-light at some great thought that would not let him sleep.

The most classical story of Channing's boyhood is so familiar that, were it omitted, it would be supplied by the majority of my readers, but to omit it would too obviously diminish the completeness of my narration. Going to hear a famous preacher at some distance, his father took him with him in his chaise, as if, though bent on his own edification, he had a mind to please his little boy. The sermon was successfully designed to harrow up the feelings with a vivid description of man's fallen state and the awful penalties attaching to his impenitent condition. "In the view of the speaker, a curse seemed to rest on the earth and darkness and horror to veil the face of nature;" and the boy entered into this view with ready sympathy and assumed that all who heard the preacher must be equally impressed. He was confirmed in this opinion when his father upon leaving the church said to an acquaintance or stranger accosting him, "Sound doctrine, sir." "It is all true, then," reflected the boy, and his heart became like lead. As they started homeward he tried to speak about these dreadful things, but the words stuck in his throat. Moreover the father's silence made the boy think that he, too, was overwhelmed. But presently the father began to whistle, — an inconceivable and startling incongruity. Worse still, on

getting home, he said nothing about the sermon, but, putting his feet in slippers, sat down before the open fire, the mere sight of which should have been terribly ominous, and settled to his newspaper as if nothing had happened. Whereupon the boy reflected, "Could what he had heard be true? No, his father did not believe it; people did not believe it. It was *not* true!"

Here was a lesson in the value of oratorical piety which he did not forget. He became more and more distrustful of the emotional ardors of religion; more and more exigent in his demand for a complete sincerity.

At this time, though small and delicate, he was well-knit and muscular, quick in his motions, active in his disposition, a comrade prized by other boys even while they resented something of the censor in his dealing with their profane and dirty talk. It is comforting to know that there was some salt of imperfection to redeem his reputation from the suspicion of being too flattering, if that is the right word. His was a certain touchiness of disposition and he was not averse (indeed he never was) to the exercise of his will on others. We are glad to read that he pounded a bigger fellow than himself for imposing on a little one, and that — when a fight was on between town and gown, Mr. Rogers's boys and the unwashed — his voice was for immediate war. Also, that when a whole dollar was given to him at once by some prodigal relation, he did not spend it carefully or put it in his

little bank, but hunted up Washington Allston and his other playmates and had what the boys of my own town and generation called "a regular blow-out." There was promise of abundant health in his good wrestling, pitching quoits, and adventurous climbing to the masthead of the brig or schooner lying at the wharf. Once he came down a stay on such a lively run as nearly to spoil his chance of further reputation. He was never at any time lacking in physical or moral courage. The boy was prophetic of the man when he begged to be permitted to spend the night on board an old vessel that was said to be haunted, and probably was — by rats. The story of his commanding a company of boy soldiers which took part in the reception of Count Rochambeau, and making an address to the count which impressed him and others very much, comes in a shape too questionable for our belief. The day of the count's reception was March 6, 1781, at which date Channing was eleven months less one day old.

He had a tender heart. If he could not answer Emerson's requirement, —

> Canst thou name all the birds without a gun? —

he could say, with less than his usual dignity of form, "Thanks to my stars, I can say I never killed a bird," adding, "I would not crush the meanest insect that crawls upon the ground." One of the tragedies of his boyhood was the finding of a bird's nest in his father's field, the little ones in which he

had fed from day to day, despoiled, and the little birds not only killed, but with such incidents of wanton cruelty as our modern lynchers have writ large in many of our States. His hatred of all cruelty to dumb creatures did not begin with this experience, but was intensified by it, and it grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength.

Already nursing a remote and solitary habit, there was one place in Newport which he loved beyond all others, and to which he went even in his early boyhood for an unspeakable delight. This was the Newport beach, which has been more beautiful for many people through their association of it with Channing's person and his familiar words: —

> No spot on earth has helped to form me so much as that beach. There I lifted up my voice in praise amidst the tempest. There, softened by beauty, I poured my thanksgiving and contrite confessions. There, in reverential sympathy with the mighty power around me, I became conscious of power within. There struggling thoughts and emotions broke forth, as if moved to utterance by nature's eloquence of the winds and waves. There began a happiness surpassing all worldly pleasures, all gifts of fortune, the happiness of communing with the works of God.

The emotions thus described were doubtless those of his later boyhood, but the roar or murmur of the beach was from his earliest years "part of his life's unalterable good."

In his thirteenth year he was sent away from home to the care of an uncle, Henry Channing,

then preaching in New London, Conn., who was to prepare him for college. But this plan was suddenly interrupted (September 21, 1792) by his father's death of some swift marching but obscure disease. By this sad event the boyhood of Channing, which had not been overstocked with the blessings which naturally pertain to being a boy, came to a decisive end. After the funeral he returned to his studies in New London for a year, but it was with the knowledge that the father had left his wife and children with but meagre provision for their support, and with the consciousness that henceforth his mother would look to him and to his older brother for advice and counsel, and that, as soon as possible, they must relieve her of all responsibility for their comfort and advantage, and be doing what they could for her.

CHAPTER II

CAMBRIDGE AND RICHMOND

A YEAR at New London enabled young Channing to pass successfully the Harvard examinations and enter the college in the fall of 1794. His fifteenth year was not yet much advanced, but it should be remembered that boys entered Harvard habitually, a century since, at an earlier age than they do now, and that the requirements were proportioned to their years. There were roots of Channing's life which struck down into the Cambridge soil, for hither his grandfather had come for his wife, Ann Remington, and here, too early dead, she had been buried, and her epitaph told the young student of the virtues which were engraved more deeply in her husband's heart than on the simple stone. In a more cheerful manner, Channing, coming to Cambridge, was coming to his own, for while there he made his home in the family of Chief Justice Dana,[1] an arrangement

[1] Francis Dana, born 1743, died 1811, father of the poet, Richard Henry Dana, and grandfather of the lawyer and publicist of the same name, whose popular and enduring title to fame is his *Two Years Before the Mast*. Francis Dana, the chief justice, distinguished himself in a long political, legal, and diplomatic career. He became chief justice of Massachusetts in 1791. He married a

which had the defects of its qualities. It secured to him the advantages of a refined society, but that a less sheltered life would have been better for his moral temper, there can be little doubt. Judge Story,[1] his most distinguished classmate, is our best historian of his college course and of the college in his time, and he mentions that, as a result of Channing's living with his uncle at some distance from the college buildings, "he did not associate much with his classmates generally," but "drew about him a circle of choice and select friends." He should have lived in the college yard and been ground together with his classmates in the social mill. It seems, however, that he was generally liked in spite of his comparative seclusion.

We are much subject to the fallacy which imputes the conditions of a later to an earlier time. We know distinguished men in their full-orbed

sister of Lucy Ellery, Channing's mother. His "country seat" in Cambridge was situated in the angle now made by Dana Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

[1] Born in Marblehead, Mass., 1779, died 1845, second only to Marshall in his judicial fame, only to Hamilton and Madison as a general interpreter of our national Constitution; father of William Wetmore Story, an excellent sculptor, writer, and poet, Lowell's classmate and friend. Other classmates were Joseph Tuckerman and Jonathan Phillips, Channing's most intimate friends for the remainder of his life, and Sidney Willard (son of President Willard) whose ultimate distinction was that of an amiable Latin professor in the college. Of college mates who were not classmates the most notable were Washington Allston, Leonard Woods, Joseph Stevens Buckminster, Channing's brilliant rival in the Boston pulpit, Charles Lowell, father of James Russell Lowell, and Lemuel Shaw, a man and judge as noble as he looked.

success, and we think of them as wearing their present attributes when they were callow youth. So, reading of Yale or Harvard a century or more ago, until we pull ourselves up, we think of the one college or the other as it is in these last days. But Harvard in 1794–98 was a very different institution from what it is now, with its millions of money, thousands of students, scores of professors and other teachers, and its immense scientific and literary apparatus. There were but two dormitories [1] then, and two other buildings, Holden Chapel the more inconspicuous, as modest in its appearance as if it had not housed "the Great and General Court of Massachusetts" only twenty years before, when General Gage was holding Boston down with British troops. The number of students at one time during Channing's residence was one hundred and seventy-three, and the teaching force was less than relatively small; the professors, Tappan, Pearson, and Webber, gravely courteous, but too unconquerably reserved and staid to encourage undergraduate approaches. The tutors, all young men, had not in those days won the reputations which they afterwards acquired as Professors Popkin and Hedge [2] and Dr. Pierce of

[1] Massachusetts Hall (1720), Hollis (1763), Harvard (rebuilt 1766), Holden Chapel (1741). Stoughton, torn down in 1780, was not rebuilt until 1804, and Holworthy and University were not built until 1813 and 1815.

[2] Levi, father of Dr. Frederic Henry Hedge, whom George William Curtis introduced to Mr. Blaine at the Concord Centennial celebration of 1875. Mr. Blaine, with the happy conscious-

Brookline.[1] Dr. Willard, the president, set an example of forbidding coldness to the other members of the faculty. The Jews had more dealings with the Samaritans than the students with the president and the professors and their families in a social way. The passage of a professor through the college yard bared every student's head anywhere visible to the professor within its bounds — or, the homage failing, there was stern reproof for those who could not prove themselves ignorant of the solemn apparition. The segregation of the students from the social life of Cambridge was complete, except for special incidents like that which furnished Channing with his social opportunity.

In his account of the college studies, Judge Story names, with some slight qualification, fifteen

ness of the man saying the right thing, said, "One hardly needs to be introduced to the author of Hedge's 'Logic.'" Whereupon Dr. Hedge pursed up a little and replied, "I am getting to be an old man, Mr. Blaine [he was then seventy], but I am not yet old enough to be my own father."

[1] The most beautiful thing I saw when I first went to Cambridge, in 1861, was Dr. Pierce's portrait, that of the venerable man, which then hung in Harvard Hall. See Dr. Hedge's delightful sketch of him in Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit*. He was one of those diarists of whom Wendell Phillips had a poor opinion. He was proud of his walking above all things, and having walked from Brookline to Cambridge to hear Everett's welcome to Lafayette, in 1824, he slept soundly through the oration. Dr. Hedge imagined him saying on his arrival in another world, "Just" so many "minutes from earth! Walked all the way!" One of his daughters married Dr. Hedge and one Rev. Thomas B. Fox, and it was my privilege to know them well in their beautiful old age.

books and authors as exhausting the entire course of study. There was small Latin and less Greek. He writes of Channing as not excelling in any one study so much as doing generally well; in some things by faithful drudgery, in some from sheer delight in them. Historical and literary studies had for him an irresistible attraction, especially English literature in its double range (De Quincey's the distinction) of knowledge and of power. Studies which in our time would be classed as forms of social science had for him, even then, a strong appeal.

In Judge Story's opinion, he surpassed all his classmates in "his power of varied and sustained written composition." Now, as at each later time, his mind reacted vividly on what he read, and to put his thoughts on paper was as necessary to him as meat and drink; more necessary as he viewed the matter. His mature habit of reading pen in hand was early formed, if not already in his college years. The semi-annual packet from London to Boston was awaited eagerly at Cambridge by a few reading men and by no one more eagerly than by Channing. The importations of books were, however, extremely meagre, and but one English periodical came along with them, the old "Monthly Magazine." The isolation of Cambridge from Boston was hardly less than that of Boston from London. The only bridge had been recently built, and the road leading to it was of the roughest description, often deep with mud, with no regular

conveyance,[1] and not inviting to those inclined to "jog the footpath way." The proximity of Cambridge to Boston was not, therefore, an appreciable element in Channing's Cambridge life.

Washington Allston, with his artistic sense of form and motion, should be good authority as to Channing's appearance at this time, and he writes that, though short in stature, he was rather muscular than slender, and was even athletic, tiring heavier fellows in the wrestling matches which were the leading college sport. He overflowed with animal spirits as with intellectual enthusiasm, and sometimes abandoned himself to unrestrained hilarity. His laugh would have pleased Carlyle, not Emerson, for Allston says, "It could not have been heartier without being obstreperous." And no one invited it more successfully than Allston. A joke with Channing was so rare a bird that we read with peculiar pleasure of one that Allston hatched — a drawing in mensuration into which the young artist introduced caricatures of the professors and tutors, and Channing had the temerity to offer this at recitation. The professor had a human heart by which he lived, and joined in the general laugh. Dr. Pierce also remembered his college looks as those of vigorous health. There was in Newport another artist besides Allston, — the celebrated miniature painter, Malbone, whose name, and nothing further, Colonel Higginson has

[1] Before Channing died there was a "long omnibus" every hour and a "short omnibus" every half hour.

economized in a pathetic novel. Both he and Allston were Channing's mates at Mr. Rogers's school in Newport, and Malbone made a sketch of Channing in his Cambridge days. It is reproduced in Mr. Brooks's "Centennial Memory," and is interesting, if not impressive. The cast of countenance is decidedly Wordsworthian, and prophesies the meditative rather than the active and philanthropic man.

He was interested at Cambridge in everything that promised the improvement of his natural ability in writing and speaking. Not without patient effort did he obtain that grace of style which seemed to come as easily as an infant's breath; and back of the unstudied appearance of his utterance there was rigorous discipline of his voice and the manner of his delivery in all its parts. His interest in writing and speaking, and the pleasure he took in pleasing others, made him "a clubable man" to a degree which otherwise he would not have attained. The clubs attracting him were those which gave him an opportunity for literary and forensic rivalry, — the Speaking Club, later called the Institute, formed from the Sophomore and Junior classes, each contributing from twelve to fifteen of its choicer spirits; the Phi Beta Kappa; the Adelphi, whose members generally were looking toward the ministry as their profession; the Hasty Pudding,[1] which originated with

[1] Its name, suggestive of the fact that the club took its pleasures *cereally*, also suggests the motto proposed by Sydney Smith

Channing's own class in 1795. The Porcellian, into which Channing was elected, was too frankly epicurean and convivial for his taste, and he seldom or never availed himself of his membership to attend its meetings. It is eloquent of his standing in the Speaking Club that his extreme youth did not prevent his achievement of the double honor of its presidency and the delivery of the valedictory address.

Our general impression of the college life in Channing's time depends a good deal on the character of the writer, who is our informant. Judge Story's construction is less stern than Channing's own. To the former, the students appeared "moral, devoted to their studies, and ambitious of distinction." There was an occasional outbreak, but little dissipation or immorality. It is, however, conceded that the drinking habit was much more excessive during Channing's college course than it was a few decades further on. Channing's recollections took on a darker hue.

College was never in a worse state than when I entered it. Society was passing through a most critical stage. The French Revolution had diseased the imagination and unsettled the understanding of men everywhere. . . . The tone of books and conversation was presumptuous and daring. The tendency of all classes was to scepticism. At such a moment the difficulties of education were necessarily multiplied. . . . The state

for the *Edinburgh Review*, — *Musam meditaris avena*, — and translated, "We cultivate the muses on a little oatmeal."

of morals among the students was anything but good; but poverty, a dread of debt, and an almost instinctive shrinking from gross vice, to which natural timidity and religious principle contributed not a little, proved effectual safeguards. I look back on the innocence of my early life with no self-complacency, and with no disposition to exalt myself above those who yielded to temptation, and among whom I doubt not there were much nobler characters than my own. But I do recollect it with great satisfaction and with fervent gratitude to Divine Providence. Had the bounds of purity once been broken, I know not that I should ever have returned to virtue.

The naïve conclusion of this passage reminds me of the good woman, who, speaking of Dr. Gannett, Channing's colleague and successor, said, "If Dr. Gannett were not such a good man, what a bad man he might be." It is quite impossible to imagine Channing as succumbing to or even seriously pressed by sensual temptation, but there are various passages in his letters and journals which do not read as if the passions which assailed him were a painted flame, and it may be that, like many another stern ascetic, his preoccupation with temptation made it more real for him than if he had lived a life less tense and strained.

It is significant of the sceptical tendencies working in the community and the college, that in 1796 every student was presented with a copy of Watson's "Apology for the Bible" in reply to Paine's "Age of Reason." It would seem that no one seriously infected could be cured by such

treatment, but Watson,[1] though weaker than water to our present apprehension, had some skill in finding the joints of Paine's critical armor, which was not very closely knit. Channing's friend henceforth, Jonathan Phillips, was for some time under the influence of Paine, and completely so, while Channing, then or a little later, seems to have given the whole freethinking school some careful study.

The years of Channing's college life coincided with the closing years of Washington's double administration, and the first two years of Adams's single term. Franco-English politics divided the country as sharply as could any domestic question. The Federalists were sympathetic with the English party to the foreign quarrel; the Jeffersonian-Republicans with the French. The Harvard students, mainly the sons of wealthy New England parents, took from these a strong Federalist bent. In 1798, Channing, who was, says Story, "among the most warm and decided in his political opinions," procured a meeting of the students with the consent of the faculty, "for the purpose of expressing their opinion on the existing crisis in public

[1] Zeal for ecclesiastical preferment was at the bottom of Watson's righteous indignation against Paine and Gibbon. De Quincey says that he was privately heretical, and a letter to Gibbon discloses his real animus. In 1791 President Willard made public denial in the *Centinel* of a charge that an abridgment of Gibbon was used as a college text-book. The book used was Millot's *Elements of General History*. See C. F. Adams's *Massachusetts: Its Historians and its History*, p. 40.

affairs." Channing made a rousing speech, and moved the appointment of a committee to draw up an address to President Adams. Story and others warmly seconded, and the address was written, published, and sent. It was Channing's handiwork, and marks at once the skill in writing to which he had already attained, and the faults of eighteenth century grandiloquence from which he would eventually cut himself clear. Recounting the ill deeds of France and her American friends, the address [1] continued, —

> We have seen this, Sir, and our youthful blood has boiled within us. When, in opposition to such conduct, we contemplate the measures of our own government, we cannot but admire and venerate the unsullied integrity, the decisive prudence, and dignified firmness which have uniformly characterized your administration. Impressed with these sentiments, we now solemnly offer the unwasted ardor and unimpaired energies of our youth to the service of our country. Our lives are our only property; and we were not the sons of those who sealed our liberties with their blood if we would not now defend with these lives that soil which affords a peaceful grave to the mouldering bones of our forefathers.

These were good mouth-filling words, and their sincerity was shortly tested in some slight degree by an episode, which was the closing one of Channing's college life. The principal oration at Commencement was assigned to him, — the class all

[1] It was signed by 170 students, so that the opposition must have been a beggarly minority of some half a dozen or less.

approving, except Channing himself, who insisted that Story ought to have the honor. But Story preferred reading a poem.[1] The subject assigned was "The Present Age," with the condition that all reference to current politics should be avoided. It seems that the Republicans (not yet called Democrats) had been handled roughly by some ardent young Federalist the previous year. One of Channing's friends wrote him with incongruous effusion that his indignation had dried up the fount of tears. "The government of the college have completed the climax of their despotism. . . . William, should you be deprived of your degree for not performing at commencement, every friend of liberty must consider it a glorious sacrifice upon the altar of your country." It must be good to be so young as that. But some concessions were made to Channing's sturdy refusal to take the emasculated part, and he got his innings when he said, "But that I am forbid, I could a tale unfold that would harrow up your souls." Whereat the plaudits rang.

Writing of his college years long afterwards to a young friend, Channing said, —

At your age I was poor, dependent, hardly able to buy clothes, but the great idea of *improvement* had

[1] Story published an early volume of poems, and that he had skill in the epigrammatic form is proved by the impromptu motto which he made for the Salem *Gazette*.

Here shall the Press the People's Rights maintain,
Unawed by Influence, and unbribed by Gain;
Here Patriot Truth her glorious Precepts draw,
Pledged to Religion, Liberty, and Law.

seized upon me. I wanted to make the most of myself. I was not satisfied with knowing things superficially or by halves, but tried to get some comprehensive views of what I studied. I had an *end*, and for a boy, a high end in view. I did not think of fitting myself for this or that particular pursuit, but for any to which events might call me. . . . The idea of carrying myself forward did a great deal for me. . . . You are in danger of reading too fast. . . . Walk out in the pleasant, still, autumnal days. Such days did a great deal for my mind and heart when I was in Cambridge.

He was perhaps thinking of one day in particular, when he was reading Hutcheson under a clump of willows [1] which were still vigorous when William Henry Channing wrote his uncle's life in 1848. Here was a favorite retreat, from the heart of which he could look out across the marshes and the winding river to the Brookline hills, and here, on a day of days, came to him his first vision of the dignity of human nature, henceforth, as his nephew quotes, "the fountain light of all his day, the master light of all his seeing." He never forgot the day marked by this morning vision, nor the book which drew aside for him the veil. Such was his exaltation that he "longed to die; as if heaven alone could give room for the exercise of such emotion." He did better: he wrote a letter to a young lady, the same who, as a little girl in Mr. Rogers's

[1] I looked for them in vain September 8, 1901. They were perhaps some of the old willows which were planted to make palisades against Indian invasion when Cambridge was first settled. Some sturdy specimens of these I found on Brattle Street, and was told of others.

school, had pleased him so much, summoning her to rouse her sex to an apprehension and service of his overmastering idea. But he never sent the letter: nor did he ever destroy it. He should have known Coventry Patmore's

> Awake, O queen, to thy renown,
> Require what 't is our wealth to give,
> And comprehend and wear the crown
> Of thy divine prerogative!

Hutcheson's influence with him was permanent. Esteemed inconsequent and superficial by some of our later ethical critics,[1] what Channing thought he found in him was really there. It certainly was not the utilitarianism or determinism which Martineau exposes that attracted him, but the alliance of beauty with goodness and the doctrine of disinterested benevolence. Another writer who attracted Channing at this time and long after was Adam Ferguson,[2] whose vogue was for a long time remarkable. His "Essay on Civil Society" was his best book for Channing. What attracted him was the enthusiasm for social progress, and the

[1] For a not too cordial estimate see Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii. 474–523. Also, Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 56–62.

[2] Whom Leslie Stephen calls "a facile and dexterous declaimer." *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 214–216. He was a disciple greater than his master, Montesquieu, to many of his contemporaries. He was, with Wesley and Dr. Johnson, opposed to our American Revolution, and wrote against Dr. Price's views on that subject, which were those of Burke, whose *Reflections on the French Revolution* were excited by Dr. Price's sympathy therewith.

idea of moral perfection as the central principle of ethics. This was Ferguson's improvement on Hutcheson's disinterested benevolence, but in Channing's thought the two ideas assumed an indissoluble unity or fraternity which we encounter in his maturer writings at every stage of their advance.

With Hutcheson and Ferguson, Channing, before leaving Cambridge, read and studied Locke, Berkeley, Reid, Hume, and Priestley; Richard Price, also, whom Franklin loved and Burke assailed, with peculiar interest and satisfaction. Channing has generally been represented as a follower of Locke and as subject to the limitations of his sensational philosophy, but some have found in him vivid anticipations of the transcendental school. The fact would seem to be that what attracted him most in the sensationalists was their unconscious leanings to the other side. He conceived himself to be free from Locke's overlordship. While reading Jouffroy's "Ethics," in 1840, he said to Elizabeth Peabody: —

I have found a fact here which interests me personally. Jouffroy says that Dr. Price's "Dissertations" were translated into German at the time of their first appearance and produced a much greater impression than they did in England; and he thinks they were the first movers of the German mind in the transcendental direction. Now I read Price when I was in college. Price saved me from Locke's philosophy. He gave me the doctrine of ideas, and during my life I have written the words Love, Right, etc., with a capital. That book profoundly

moulded my philosophy into the form it has always retained.[1]

Another abiding satisfaction of Channing's life which began at Cambridge was that furnished by Shakespeare. There was during his Harvard course an enthusiastic Shakespearean revival in the college, and his share in it was not inferior to that of any. The interest thus awakened was one of the constants of his life when he exchanged the quiet and still air of college life for what to him was relatively storm and stress.

Before this exchange was made he had chosen the profession which in his own person he so much exalted and adorned. He was not spared the perturbation which so many suffer before coming to a stable choice. In his junior year he was equally indifferent to law and gospel, and took medicine as ill; but this shortly attracted him so much as to be a subject of earnest correspondence with his grandfather Ellery; next law was in the lead, but, even while his classmates supposed this to be his final choice, he had resolved to be a minister of

[1] For able but contrasted views of Price, see Martineau's *Types of Ethical Theory*, ii. 439–447, and Stephen's *English Thought*, ii. 12–15. Both find in him anticipations of Kant, Stephen of his "categorical imperative" and Martineau of Kant's distinction of the "Critical and Practical Reason." Strangely enough, Price's objective was the moral *sense* view, the *moral æsthetic*ism of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson by which Channing was attracted. But Channing's habit, like Mirabeau's, was to "pounce on his own wherever he found it," and often what attracted him in another was a mere symbol of something more profound in his own thought.

religion. The freethinking about him, or, as he phrased it, "the prevalence of infidelity," led him to examine the evidences for Christianity, "and then," he says, "I found for what I was made."

But before he could enter the ministry, a period of self-support and special study nearly five years long was to work many changes in his body and his mind, to blanch the ruddy cheeks and waste the vigorous frame; to shadow even while it deepened his life's intellectual and moral flow. He had already done some teaching (in Lancaster, Mass.) on one of his vacations, and he now accepted an invitation from Mr. David Meade Randolph, of Richmond, Va., who had seen him in Newport and been much impressed by his character and acquirements, to become a tutor in his family. With Mr. Randolph's own children there were a few of his neighbors', some twelve all told. For a time he entered freely into the social life of Richmond, which was at its best in Mr. Randolph's own house, at his own table. Here came John Marshall, already a great figure in law and politics, and many leading citizens of the town and State. Channing was captivated by the Virginian manners. "The men do not forget the friendship and feelings of their youth. They call each other by their Christian names. . . . How different from our Northern manners. There avarice and ceremony at the age of twenty graft the coldness and unfeelingness of age on the disinterested ardor of youth." The trait which most attracted him in comparison

with "the selfish prudence of a Yankee" was the less talk and thinking about money. One is reminded of very similar impressions received by Phillips Brooks some fifty years further along. Also of Thackeray, who said, "Catch me speaking ill of people who have such good claret." But Channing did not care for the claret, and concerning the dark side of Virginia he could not hold his peace. "Could I only take from the Virginians their *sensuality* and their *slaves*, I should think them the greatest people in the world. As it is, with a few great virtues they have innumerable vices." The tradition of slavery was fresh in the Newport of Channing's boyhood, but there the slaves had been house-servants for the most part, thus furnishing that aspect of slavery which in the South has disguised, for many bland apologists, the lower condition of those working in the fields. The Randolphs, husband and wife, would gladly have been quit of slavery altogether. Channing could write, "I hear it everywhere spoken of with abhorrence." Eli Whitney, of Connecticut, had invented the cotton-gin only five years before, and it had hardly begun to work the miracle which made Virginia the great breeding-pen for the supply of negroes for the cotton-raisers further south. Channing, however, formed his opinions on direct observation. To his tutoring he sometimes added the distribution of the field-hands' weekly rations, and once, for a short time, he was left in sole charge of these slaves, during the absence of the Randolphs

from home. Hence germinal convictions which flowered and fruited in due time: —

> There is one object here which always depresses me. It is *slavery*. Language cannot express my detestation of it. Master and slave! Nature never made such a distinction or established such a relation. Should you desire it, I will give you some idea of the situation and character of the Negroes in Virginia. It is a subject so degrading to humanity, that I cannot dwell on it with pleasure. I should be obliged to show you every vice heightened by every meanness and added to every misery. The influence of slavery on the whites is almost as fatal as on the blacks themselves.

Hitherto, politically, Channing's had been a Federalist environment. It was now Jeffersonian. The least questioning of Federalist infallibility stamped him for his Northern friends as a traitor, a red Republican, a Jacobin. He made an elaborate disclaimer, but could not wholly clear himself, seeing that he had a good word for Elbridge Gerry, whose politics were Virginian, and had views of a standing army which are as pertinent to-day as then: "A soldier *by profession* is too apt to forget that he is a *citizen*. . . . An army in time of peace is a hotbed of vice." It does ill and communicates. Worst of all he wrote, "I blush when I think of the Alien and Sedition laws," — then sacrosanct in Federalist estimation, though Marshall had manfully opposed them and so dimmed for many Northern eyes the laurels he had won in France. But notwithstanding these

deductions Channing's Federalism was still tolerably sound. He made little or no distinction between the principles of Jefferson and those of Danton, Robespierre, and Marat. He gets very anxious and resolved when he contemplates the triumph of these principles in America: —

> I never will breathe the same air with those who are tainted with the foul impurities of French principles. . . . With tears in my eyes I will bid farewell to the roof which sheltered my infancy and to the green graves of my fathers and take up my abode in the foreign land from which I boast my descent, and which my honest ancestors left in hopes of finding climes more favorable to liberty and the rights of man.

Nevertheless Channing was at this time dreaming dreams of social betterment which had much in common with those of the radical French idealists and their English followers and friends. He was reading Rousseau with great admiration; Godwin's "Political Justice" and Mary Wollstonecraft's "Rights of Woman" with hardly less. Mrs. Wollstonecraft's book he thinks "a masculine performance," and on other subjects than marriage finds her sentiment "noble, generous, and sublime." Even for her irregular marriage he pleads that "she acted on principle." It is even probable that he thought of joining himself to a body of Scotch immigrants who were intending a basis of common property. Renan's version is, "The idea of communism, the first, and consequently the falsest, that meets the mind when it begins to reflect on the

reform of human society, crossed his mind for a moment." But Renan concedes that "on all questions of social, moral, and political order, he meditated very early and with a great deal of force." A letter written in his twentieth year, which is our fullest expression of his social aspirations during his stay in Richmond, is certainly remarkable for a boy of that age, and also as showing how soon the main lines of his ultimate moral system were laid down. He says that he derives his sentiments from the nature of man. Here was a characteristic note. The chief end of man is the improvement of his mind in knowledge and virtue. Avarice is the great bar to such improvement. The cure for avarice is a community of goods. The wants of the body are few, and the labor of man, which should be directed to the improvement of the mind, is misapplied to them. He is convinced that virtue and benevolence are natural to man; that the principle of benevolence is "so strongly impressed on the human heart by God himself" that it may become the conscious principle of action. In all which the voice is Channing's, the hands are the hands of Hutcheson and Ferguson and Adam Smith. Selfishness and avarice have their roots in the false ideas that the individual has interests distinct from the community and that the body requires more care than the mind. Then for the cure! You must destroy all distinctions of property; make men conscious of their dignity of mind. "You must convince mankind that they

themselves and all that they possess are but *parts of a great whole;* that they are bound by God, their common Father, to *labor* for the good of this great whole; that *mind, mind,* requires all their care;" and that the dignity of their nature and the happiness of others require them to improve this mind in knowledge and in virtue. In conclusion he summons the friend to whom he is writing to join him in his great crusade: —

> We few, we happy few, we band of brothers,

will unite our exertions in the cause of virtue and science. We will beat down with the irresistible engines of truth those strong ramparts consolidated by time, within which avarice, ignorance, and selfishness have intrenched themselves. We will plant the standards of virtue and science on the ruins, and lay the foundation of a fair fabric of human happiness, to endure as long as time, and to acquire new grace and lustre with the lapse of ages. — My dear Shaw, I fear you will say I am crazy. No, no, —

> My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,
> And makes as healthful music.[1]

His friends did think him crazy or inclined that way. His brother Francis, for whom he had the warmest admiration, wrote him, "You know nothing of yourself. You talk of your apathy and stoicism, and you are the baby of your emotions, and dandled by them without any chance of being weaned." Other correspondents poked fun at his exalted views in a manner that must have hurt the

[1] The whole letter should be read in the *Memoir*, i. 111–116.

young enthusiast a good deal. His grandfather Ellery used the opprobrium of French influence to dam the swelling flood. Eventually this subsided, but it left behind it a deposit into which the seeds of social theory and aspiration always fell as into good ground. Brook Farm got a better hearing because of those early hopes and dreams. His nephew characteristically questions whether his influence would not have been wider and deeper if the realization of these had been the engrossing purpose of his whole career.

Meantime he was reacting from the Gallican criticism of Christianity which was rife about him to a conservative opinion of its character. He read the "infidel books," but a study of Christian evidences convinced him that Christianity was a divine revelation. He applied "to the Bible, — that only source of divine knowledge, — and to the Bible alone," for the principles of conduct which should regulate his life. The "happiness of another state" bulked large on his horizon, — a less noble and less characteristic ideal than the social one it had displaced. The perturbations of his mind were reflected in the letters he received. One correspondent announces himself a "Price-ite," as if that kind of heretic had for Channing any terrors. Another commends to him Butler's "Analogy" for proof that the mysteriousness of doctrines does not militate against their truth. Evidently Channing's tendency during the last part of his stay in Richmond was to a more evangelical temper, if not

to a more orthodox opinion. It was accompanied by a profound religious experience which disqualified, as a genuine "conversion," an experience in New England from which he had heretofore dated the beginning of his Christian life. This new experience, in its turn, resolved itself into an incident of a process which was the significant matter. Asked, as he grew old, if he had ever experienced conversion, he answered, "I should say not, unless my whole life may be called, as truly it has been, a *process* of conversion." But, while his Richmond life was a present reality with him, he could find no expression for its deepest part more apt than "that *change of heart*, which is necessary to constitute a Christian." What actually happened seems to have been the infusion of an element of sincere piety into his morality, together with a deepening sense of the importance of the personal influence of Jesus in history and to the individual soul.

> I once considered mere moral attainments as the only object I had to pursue. I have now solemnly given myself up to God. I consider supreme love to him as the first of all duties, and morality seems but a branch from the vigorous root of religion. I love mankind because they are the children of God.

He found a better reason for loving them as he went on, and there was nothing prophetic here of Channing's ultimate conception of religion as "the worship of goodness," as morality flowering at its top into the love of God. He reversed, in short,

the doctrine of his youth. Yet not, therefore, less real for the time being, or in its permanent effects, was the experience which coincided with his stay in Richmond. A few months before his death he wrote to a friend: —

I spent a year and a half there, and perhaps the most eventful of my life. I lived alone, too poor to buy books, spending my days and nights in an outbuilding, with no one beneath my roof except during the hours of school-keeping. There I toiled as I have never done since, for gradually my body sank under the unremitting exertion. With not a human being to whom I could communicate my deepest thoughts and feelings, and shrinking from common society, I passed through intellectual and moral conflicts of heart and mind so absorbing as often to banish sleep and to destroy almost wholly the power of digestion. I was worn well-nigh to a skeleton. Yet I look back on those days of loneliness and frequent gloom with thankfulness. If I ever struggled with my whole soul for purity, truth, and goodness it was there. Then, amidst sore trials, the great question, I trust, was settled within me whether I would be the victim of passion, the world, or the free child and servant of God. . . . In a licentious and intemperate city, one spirit, at least, was preparing in silence and loneliness to toil not wholly in vain for truth and holiness.

Much besides the unremitting study and seclusion contributed to Channing's physical misery and the depression of his spirits. It would have been better for him if his opinion that "the wants of the body are few," "*mind*, *mind*, requires all our care," had been a mere opinion. But it was with

him a rule of life. Not only did he remain at his books till two or three o'clock in the morning, and often till the daylight broke, but he made harsh experiments in living, went insufficiently clothed, without an overcoat in winter weather, sleeping upon the bare floor in a cold room, eating very little, and that what he did n't like. He fancied he was curbing his animal nature, when the temptations that assailed him were the spawn of his ascetic glooms. He thought he was hardening himself when he was making himself frail and pervious to every wind that blew. His brain, for lack of nourishment, grew weak, and from real thinking turned to aimless revery. The printed page conveyed no ideas to his mind. Walking, he dragged one foot after the other for whole hours together, observing little, enjoying nothing. The lovely banks of the James River were his favorite haunt, and their luxurious growths of tree and vine and their too balmy air begot a languor in his blood and mind that intensified his habit of revery. "Do anything innocent," he wrote a young friend from some vantage of his later years, "rather than give yourself up to *revery*." He relates his own experience and goes on: "I suppose I was seduced in part by physical debility, but the body suffered as much as the mind. I found, too, that the imagination threatened to inflame the passions, and that, if I meant to be virtuous, I must dismiss my musings. . . . I beg you to avail yourself of my experience."

An adventurous voyage in a leaky vessel, a miserable little coaling sloop, the captain and crew habitually drunk, brought him back to Newport in July, 1800. He had been in Richmond twenty-one months, a painfully eventful period. If he had saved his soul alive, he had made a wreck of his body, which was never after this to know a day of perfect health. Could this be so and the informing soul receive no detriment? Sound as the mind in the unsound body came to be, surely the total personality was less effective than it would have been if the boy's joyous health had been transmitted unimpaired to the young minister, and the mature "friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit."

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CHAPTER III

THE PARISH MINISTER

On Channing's return to Newport the family received him the more tenderly because his broken health seemed ominous of fatal ill. Francis, the elder brother, had gone to Cambridge to engage in the practice of his profession (law), and William found himself installed as the head of the family. He had inherited something of his mother's irritability and something of his father's skill in soothing her with his embracing arm and his assurance, "It will all be well." With his own irritability and sharpness of speech and manner he made a good fight and came off more than conqueror. His regular duty was the tuition of his youngest brother and a young Randolph who had followed him from Virginia. He busied himself also with his sisters' studies, and with the happy confidence of twenty summers set himself to form the mind of one of these, more or less fortunate than the others, and to be her spiritual guide. He went little into society, nursing a habit solitary and recluse; introspective and self-searching to a dangerous degree. He found "a degrading selfishness reigning in his heart." He must avoid all levity and unmeaning gayety

and make himself an example of the beauty of holiness. "When I feel irritable, let me be silent; let me quit society." If he "must vindicate his character, let it be in as few and temperate words as consist with the regard to what I owe to truth." With much of this kind there are intimations of the coming man: "Let charity embrace in her broad arms all sects. Why should I brand any who differ from me with opprobrious epithets?"

Meanwhile he was carrying on his theological studies with impassioned eagerness, with a view to entering the ministry. A little office near the house served him for a study, and there his evening lamp frequently vied with Dr. Hopkins's, a few rods away, as herald of the dawn. Besides the little office he had "two noble places of study," one the Redwood library, the other his much-loved beach. It was during this Newport interval that he came to know this great companion best, and without the morbid inclination of an earlier period, to sink to rest in its embracing arms. The Redwood library was a stiller place, and at all seasons a much less frequented one. Week after week sometimes went by without the interruption of a single visitor, while Channing took the astonished books, dust-buried, from their shelves, and found in them, like mummy wheat, the nourishment he craved. The library had been founded by a liberal thinker, and though the Episcopalians had gradually monopolized the management and driven the founder out, as the historian of the library has faithfully set down,

the original impulse had perhaps insured a more inclusive range of books than it would otherwise have had.

One personal influence was at this time predominant, that of Dr. Hopkins. In Channing's Newport sermon of 1836, in his note to that sermon, and in a letter which he wrote to Professor Park of Andover, Hopkins's biographer, there is some of the most serviceable material which those writing about Hopkins have discovered to this day. Channing's impression was that Jonathan Edwards owed much to Hopkins of his later and nobler views of religion, embodied in his "Nature of Virtue" and "End of God in Creation."[1] "I was attached to Hopkins," he says, "mainly by his theory of disinterestedness." For this Hutcheson had prepared him, little as there would seem to be in common between the calm philosopher and the impassioned theologian. It is quite as strange, but only superficially, that Channing should have been most attracted to Hopkins by his most startling paradox. He heard Hopkins debate this with a friend who made some critical objection to the translation, "I could wish myself accursed," etc. (Rom. ix. 3). Hopkins said that Paul *ought* to have said this, whether he did or no. That Hopkins practised

[1] Edwards's development was from the idea of virtue as the love of God considered as pure being to the idea of virtue as the love of God considered as morally excellent. Here was a change that would appeal powerfully to Channing. For Hopkins's relation to these views, see A. V. G. Allen's *Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 318, 321. See also pp. 327–338.

the disinterestedness he preached was an additional bond. At a time when he was getting next to no salary he dropped a hundred-dollar bill he had just got for copyright into a missionary collection. His antislavery preaching was further testimony to the same effect. So was his doughty Federalism, which did not spare his sole male church member and deacon, who was an ardent Jeffersonian. Channing was drawn to Hopkins by his perfect honesty and his love of honesty in others even while he despised their heresies. He was repelled by his doctrine of predestination, which he thought wholly incompatible with the freedom of the human will. When Channing preached for him (his first Newport sermon), Dr. Hopkins smiled approval and said, "The hat is not yet made." It seems that Dr. Bellamy had compared a progressive science of theology to the making of a hat. You must first catch your beaver, and so on. Having told the story, Dr. Hopkins added, "The hat is not yet made, and I hope you will help to finish it." And so he did, much widening the brim.

Channing returned to Cambridge early in 1802, having been appointed regent in the college, his office to preserve order, if possible, in one of the college buildings where he had his room, and have an eye upon the students in a general way. If not quite a sinecure, it was approximately that, though probably less so for him than it might have been for some others. Meantime it assured him shelter, with food and clothing sufficient for his modest

wants, and abundant opportunity to carry on his theological studies. His friends, who had expected the boy's return, found that the boy, so full of health and joy, had been displaced by a young man, thin to emaciation, all of whose physical elasticity had gone, while his mind had taken on a solemn, almost mournful cast. A classmate [1] found him profoundly subject to the authority of Hopkins, but protests that it was "rather owing to the influence of his virtues than to the weight of his opinions." The truth was that Hopkins's virtues had recommended his opinions, and these — that virtue is disinterested benevolence; that moral perfection is the goal of human life — were opinions which, derived from Hutcheson and Ferguson, and intensified by Hopkins, Channing made central to the ellipse of his completest scheme of thought and life.[2]

Little is known of those theological studies which Channing pursued under the guidance of President Willard and Professor Tappan. The latter was considered a fine preacher by George Cabot and Fisher Ames, — men whose judgment was regarded

[1] Daniel Appleton White, the "Judge White" of a long and honorable fame. See A. P. Peabody's *Harvard Graduates*, pp. 76–97. The sketch is painfully interesting for its account of Harvard life in Channing's time: "At least one fourth of every class became sots." "College work was sometimes suspended for several days, the entire Faculty being employed on inquest into some recent escapade or outrage." The account agrees with Channing's, as already given, better than with Judge Story's.

[2] The same opinions constituted Fénelon's attraction for him in a preëminent degree, though not without some sober qualification.

as infallible by the Federalists of Boston and the region round about. What Channing thought of the writers who did most to form his adolescent mind must be gathered mainly from a letter written further on and which may be, to some extent, the older man's correction of the younger's aberrations. There is general depreciation of English theology, too general, with marks of special approbation. The Established Church had been "a dozing place for minds which anywhere else would have distinguished themselves," and "you will not find broad views of Christianity, showing its harmony with human nature and with the great laws of the universe, and its tendency to secure the true perfection of the individual and the race;" that is, his own final scheme of thought. A list follows, headed, too conventionally, by Butler's "Analogy," with which Channing had no natural sympathy, and strangely enough omitting Butler's "Sermons,"[1] which he held most precious, coequal with the writings of Hutcheson and Price, another proof of the steady gravitation of his mind to the intuitive and transcendental point of view. The entire list is much the same as was commended to me by my teachers in the Divinity School, 1861–64: Lardner and Paley, Campbell and Farmer, on "Miracles," Priestley's "Letters to a Philosophi-

[1] My own copy (1792) was Dr. Gannett's book, bought in his Divinity School days, and enriched by a marginal comment by his classmate, William Henry Furness. I please myself with thinking that Channing's copy was of the same edition, the liberal page fit symbol of the liberal thought.

cal Unbeliever," Watson's answers to Paine and Gibbon (in my day these had gone to their own place) Locke's "Reasonableness of Christianity," Edwards on the "Will" and Samuel Clarke for counter-blast, Lowth's "Lectures on Hebrew Poetry," etc. William Law's writings are mentioned with special admiration, while Hartley's "Observations on Man," "on the whole an admirable work, is disfigured by a gross mechanical philosophy." Here, as everywhere, we have his repulsion from the materialistic, necessarian, utilitarian, to the opposing views. If the intellectual board seems spread but meagrely, we may well ask ourselves how many of the books produced in our own time and which we batten on with fearless joy will tempt men's appetites a century hence. Channing, though writing some time[1] after he had left Cambridge, confesses not to have read Hooker, or Chillingworth, or Cudworth, whose "Intellectual System of the Universe" (1678) enjoyed a remarkable revival during the Transcendental period.

The exigent self-examination of the Newport days was still kept up. Many pages of his journal were devoted to the conduct of his mind, the ethics of the intellect being to him, even then, a favorite haunt, where he was much alone. It is strange to find him saying, "It is my misfortune that I have read much, reflected little." He reformed this altogether. The bodily weakness increased and

[1] It is an exasperating circumstance that W. H. Channing, in the *Memoir*, often omits the date where it is essential to our right understanding.

therewith came "a kind of stupefaction of mental inactivity, a weight of dulness oppressing all my faculties." It was great good fortune that he had his brother Francis to walk and talk with. The Mount Auburn woods enticed them, not yet made over to the dead, and so at once sanctified with sacred dust and marred by

Granite permanence of cockney taste.

But for this affectionate communion, it seems possible that Channing would have gone to utter wreck. Drawing near to the work of the ministry with trembling heart, as if approaching a new world, he united himself with the First Church in Cambridge, of which Dr. Abiel Holmes, father of Oliver Wendell, was then pastor, "a moderate Calvinist," being in this respect one of the majority of preachers round about. At this time Channing drew up some articles of belief, supposed to represent his own. They were notably Hopkinsian in some respects, but, in their views of Christ's nature, they inclined to that Arian doctrine of Jesus which figured him as neither God nor man, nor God *and* man, but a being *sui generis*, preëxistent, the creator of all worlds, only less eternal and less infinite than God. Approbated to preach by the Cambridge Association, the ministers of that association anticipated his gravitation to the Hopkinsian side in the division that was getting every day more definite. There was some ground for the anticipation. "There was a time," he wrote long after, "when I verged to Calvinism, for ill health and depression gave me

a dark view of things. But the doctrine of the Trinity held me back." Reading Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" he "came upon a prayer to Jesus Christ." That gave him pause. "I was never in any sense a Trinitarian." What is most interesting here is that, in the event, the doctrine of the Trinity was among the least of his objections to the orthodox system. It was the Calvinism of that system that excited his celestial ire; its representation of human nature as totally depraved and of God's nature as much the same, with its doctrines of election and reprobation and of the atonement as a reconciliation of a wrathful God to sinful men.

When he began to preach for one congregation and another, his first sermon, several times repeated, was from the text, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee." We have several accounts of that sermon, one of them written by Charles T. Brooks, with his eye on the object. It underwent various changes of a kind that throws some light upon Channing's progress from a less to a more simple style. It was his first sermon at Federal Street and also his first at Newport. That he did not despise its youth is made plain by his preaching it a second time at Federal Street in 1804 and again in 1808. He was making public confession when he wrote of the wretchedness caused by fretfulness and anger in social intercourse, and he was already verging on the heresy of Theodore Parker's South Boston ser-

mon when he said, "Perhaps Christ when on earth won the hearts of publicans and sinners more by his gentle manners and offices of kindness, when he ate and drank with them, than by exhibiting his miracles."

This sermon, and others of like quality, with a manner fervid and solemn to an unusual degree, attracted not only the Federal Street Society, but also the Brattle Street, where Dr. Peter Thacher,[1] who was getting old, wanted a colleague. Federal Street, as the weaker plant, naturally attracted Channing, and on February 12, 1803, he accepted the call extended in December, 1802, and was ordained and installed June 1, 1803. He would have had his uncle Henry Channing, with whom he had studied in New London, preach the ordination sermon, but in the event he gave the charge to the candidate, — Dr. Tappan, the Harvard professor of Theology, preaching the sermon. Other men of note took part: Dr. Holmes, Dr. Osgood of Medford, whose memory with that of his daughters has been widely blessed, while Joseph Tuckerman, Channing's classmate, and henceforth, with Jonathan Phillips, one of his dearest friends, gave the right hand of fellowship. George Ticknor, of "Spanish Literature" and other literary fame, never forgot the impression which Channing made on him on the occasion of his ordination: the pale,

[1] Father of Samuel Cooper Thacher, one of Channing's dearest friends. The father died in 1804, and was succeeded by Channing's brilliant rival, Buckminster.

enraptured face, "the spirit-small hand" raised in benediction, and especially his reading of the closing hymn: —

> My tongue repeats her vows,
> Peace to this sacred house!
> For here my friends and brethren dwell,
> And since my glorious God
> Makes thee his blest abode,
> My soul shall ever love thee well.

The different parts of the service were always for Channing like the different characters of Shakespeare's plays for the great poet: none of them was slighted. There were those for whom the hymns and prayers were more than the preaching; "the first hymn a service," as one said.

The "sacred house" on Federal Street, built in 1744, was already nearly sixty years old. It was small and phenomenally plain, bare, and ugly, even for its time and type. The society had been formed by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians in 1729, and their place of worship until they built their church was a commodious barn. The church had had its historic moment in 1788, when the State convention met in it which acceded to the national Constitution of 1787. The street was named by this event, than which nothing could have honored the building more in Channing's eyes, or have reminded him more vividly of the most enthusiastic moment of his earlier life, when he shared his father's triumph in the tardy accession of Rhode Island to the Union of these States.

We must beware of thinking of the Boston to

which Channing came as being in anything like the present city, except its general situation and its topography to a less degree. It was far more like the Boston of 1703 than like the Boston of our time. The expansion of the United States had just been initiated by the Louisiana Purchase (May 2), but as yet the United States were a fringe along the Atlantic coast, having the Alleghanies for its western edge. Contracted as they were, they were not homogeneous, and Thomas Jefferson, then President, knew less of New England than we know of the Philippines, though in general he was well informed. It was a day of small things, the expenses of New York City in 1800 amounting to $130,000; in 1900 to $98,000,000. In the same year, New York, the State, for the first time led Massachusetts (then including Maine) in population, by 16,000 souls. The census recently completed counted 25,000 inhabitants of Boston, about one twentieth of the population of the State. The general appearance was that of an old English market town.[1] The sidewalks as well as the streets were paved with cobble-stones; a custom which persists in many foreign towns, as, to my sorrow, I have learned. The few oil lamps on the streets at night but served to make the outer darkness more compact.

The social aspect was that of the eighteenth century, and conservative at that. Gentlemen of means

[1] See Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, vol. i., for these details and especially for the social aspect.

wore colored coats and figured waistcoats, with knee-breeches and long white-topped boots, ruffled shirt-fronts and wristbands and stuffed white cravats, cocked hats (the more elderly) and wigs. As in the Marblehead of my boyhood, the streets on Saturday evenings were full of boys carrying pots of beans or pudding to the baker's oven, so, when Channing came to Boston, they were full of boys carrying home piles of wig-boxes for the better observance of the Lord's Day.[1] The stately minuet was still the evening dance. In the summer season Boston rivalled Newport as a place of Southern resort, its antislavery atmosphere not yet sharpening its east wind. The big English dinner was the king-pin about which the best society revolved. This society was as exclusive of Jeffersonian Republicans as freezing water of animal germs. A lady of the period said, "I should as soon have expected to see a cow in a drawing-room as a Jacobin."

Boston had, in 1803, little to show of that intellectual life of which eventually it had so much. In fact Channing, Buckminster, and Norton were the prime movers of the new régime. Few could speak French or read it. Madame De Staël's "L'Allemagne" (1814) was the first seed of Ger-

[1] For the best possible description of a social magnate of the time, see in O. B. Frothingham's *Memoir of William Henry Channing*, pp. 9–13, Channing's description of his grandfather Stephen Higginson, a Federalist of the deepest dye, and an important member of that Essex "junto" which bulks so large in Massachusetts politics of a century since.

man studies, and its growth was slow. The Queen Anne men reigned in literary taste. If Burns had been discovered, it was probably by some miserable Jeffersonian. Wordsworth's first American reprint was in Philadelphia in 1802. Of creative ability there was none except as Nathaniel Bowditch's "Practical Navigator" had set sail in 1800, and Jedidiah Morse, of whom more hereafter, had published his geography. The best promise of Prescott and Bancroft and Motley and Parkman and Fiske and Rhodes was the local work of Jeremy Belknap, founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society, who died in 1798. There were good lawyers like Dexter and Parsons; and Fisher Ames was magnified in the local atmosphere to the proportions of a Burke or a Bossuet. The sure thing about Ames was that he was a political pessimist of such sombre hue that his temper overhung the common consciousness of Boston like a leaden pall. In 1795 he had feared that he might outlive the government and the Constitution of his country, and naturally his gloom had deepened with the triumph of democratic principles. He complained that even the Federalists did not appreciate as they should "the progress of licentiousness," a euphemism for the spread of Jeffersonian opinions. There were perhaps five hundred who did so, and perhaps not. Within a few months after Channing's settlement, Pickering, one of the Essex "junto," was writing from his senatorial post at Washington that the time for New

England to secede had come, and submitting plans for attaching New York to the projected Northern confederacy. George Cabot, in 1814 president of the famous Hartford Convention, writing for himself, Higginson, and Ames, Pickering's colleagues in the "junto," counselled that the time for action had not yet come, but they would nurse their wrath, meanwhile, to keep it warm. It was some comfort when Samuel Adams, the Father of the Revolution and of New England democracy, died in October, 1803. So long as there was any life in his decrepit frame the old times might come back.

Fisher Ames's five hundred thoroughgoing pessimists included, Mr. Henry Adams thinks, nearly all the Massachusetts clergy. In Boston and vicinity these clergymen were nearly all Unitarians, the doctrine of the Trinity and the more distinctive doctrines of Calvinism having for them no longer any attraction. Had Jefferson been aware of this, his fear and hate of the New England clergy would have been qualified in no slight degree, for his enthusiasm for religious liberality was even greater than for political. But he formed his ideas of them upon the clergy against whom he had contended in Virginia, men impervious to ideas, "beasts at Ephesus," whose fangs had left their memories in his shrinking flesh. But what we are bound to consider is the effect which the political temper of the clergy had upon the expression of their theological opinions. Within a week

of Channing's ordination, the Rev. Jedidiah Morse, of Charlestown, preached the Election Sermon, and he said, "Let us guard against the insidious encroachments of *innovation* — that evil and beguiling spirit which is now stalking to and fro in the earth seeking whom it may destroy." Morse was Calvinistic, but his temper, a more important matter than his opinions, was that of the whole body of clergy of which Channing had now become a conscious part. Dr. Hedge has characterized the period immediately preceding Channing's settlement as "the dryest in the history of the American pulpit." The impression made by Channing's early preaching was enhanced immensely by its vivid contrast with the prevailing tone.

Channing was fortunate in being welcomed for some months after his ordination to the home of Stephen Higginson, Jr.,[1] in Brookline. That the kindly influences abounding there could not disperse the gloom now settling on his mind is ample proof how thick and dark it was. An angel unawares may be a distinguished and at the same time an uncomfortable guest. "Society seemed distasteful; he joined but little in conversation; took his meals in haste; was retired in his ways; lived mostly in his study; appeared rather annoyed than pleased with visitors; seldom went abroad, — declining, if possible, all invitations; and, in a word, was most content when left uninterruptedly to him-

[1] Son of the Federalist magnate and father of Colonel T. W. Higginson, in whose *Cheerful Yesterdays* he is carefully portrayed.

self."[1] And still the awful register of his introspective search went on. A "subject" was his besetting sin, and had for him the concreteness of Luther's personal devil. If he did not throw his inkstand at the intruder, he did much of its contents. He complains, "A subject has been very injurious to me. It has shut me up in my room till my body has been exhausted." He must try to fix the number of hours during which he will attend to a subject. His long absorption in a subject enfeebles his mind, prevents its free action, casts a gloom over his thoughts and produces painful anxiety. "Because doubt spreads over one subject I ought not to doubt all." His search for truth was vain and the laurels of the successful seekers would not let him sleep. When he writes his uncle Henry, "Every day teaches me more of my weakness and corruption and yet I seem to grow no better," we may have something of the expected note, but his sorrows were for the most part real enough. "I cannot describe to you the weight which weighed down my mind at the beginning of my ministry." There was little need of the political infusion in a cup which, without that, was so bitter to his taste. The depression continued for some years. But for the encouragement of his brother Francis he would probably have been lost to his profession before putting forth more than the smallest fraction of his strength.

That some who heard the young preacher found

[1] *Memoir*, i. 175–176.

him oppressively solemn and called him "gloomy" is what we should expect from what we have seen of him in his personal isolation. Shortly (1805) Buckminster came to Brattle Street and his more cheerful manner and more glowing style attracted those whom Channing could not please. Andrews Norton said that "hearing Buckminster, one seemed to be walking in the triumphal procession of truth." Kirkland, soon to become president of Harvard, had a like, but milder, less irresistible attraction, while S. C. Thacher, who succeeded him in 1811 as minister of the New South, was much like Channing, but of a more genial spirit; and all these men were strong where Channing was always weakest, on the social side. But Channing's seriousness, his spirituality, his fervor, the passionate earnestness of his direct appeals, the tenderness of his devotion, his awed and trembling sense of infinite things, could not but draw to him many who had been hungering for such bread from heaven as he brought. His congregation, as he found it, was one representing little wealth or culture. It soon represented more of these unequal advantages, and in 1809 the increasing numbers compelled the building of a much larger church, a good example of its kind, in which the society worshipped until 1859,[1] when, in the spirit of Channing, nine or ten

[1] After that there was a three years' interval in tabernacles while the present Arlington Street church was building, a noble structure in that style to which Gibbs and Wren gave its most characteristic note.

ministers, of various denominations, joined with Dr. Gannett in the tenderness of his farewell. Doubtless the main defect of Channing in those first years of his ministry constituted his chief attraction for a good many persons. The physical immensity of Phillips Brooks would not then have been counted to him for righteousness. The passion for bigness of all kinds had not yet taken possession of the public mind. The less body, the more spirit, was an accepted axiom, even with those who thought the heavy English dinner a great institution; and Channing's physical delicacy — the thin, pale cheeks, and the large eyes that seemed conversant with all hidden mysteries — made him appear less human than angelic, a spirit visible and audible to mortal sense. But Channing was himself already cured of his conceit that body and spirit were opposing terms and that he must build his spiritual temple on the ruins of his bodily frame. From his earlier misconception, —

> This frame so weak, sharp sickness' hue,
> And this pale cheek God loves in you, —

he reacted manfully, hating the valetudinarian habit from which he could not shake himself free, and trying hard to guard himself against the dangers of which he was as well aware as Dr. Johnson or Mr. Emerson, though he left us no dictum so concise as the latter's, "Sickness is felony," and the former's, "Every man is a rascal as soon as he is sick."

His stern self-scrutiny convicted him of self-

consciousness in the pulpit and of ambition for distinction in his private heart. He finds himself wishing to preach *striking* rather than *melting* sermons, a contrast which discloses the quality of his earlier ideal and its inferiority to that of character-building and social reformation to which he finally attained. In the first years of his ministry it was difficult for those on either side of the widening breach to say with much complacency, "He has become as one of us." The more and less orthodox made him equally welcome to their pulpits in the course of that round of exchanges which was then strictly habitual. Possibly and probably the more orthodox were friendlier with him than the less. It has been much insisted that Channing's religious thought was all of one piece from his first preaching till the last. But if his early preaching was not formally Calvinistic it was frankly evangelical. Judged by the present standards of orthodoxy it was hyper-orthodox, and this for six or eight years or more after his settlement.

The truth of this position was first made clear to me by my quaint and picturesque old friend, Captain John Codman, whose father was ordained in Dorchester in 1808. The father was avowedly a Calvinist of the stricter sort, yet not only did Channing have no hesitation in preaching his ordination sermon, but he embodied in that sermon the traditional scheme of salvation without stint, in his description of an everlasting hell, trying, it

seemed, to be as impressive as Jonathan Edwards. Captain Codman's recollection of this sermon from some early reading was accurate and comprehensive, but I have confirmed his memory by other information.[1] We find Dr. Channing warning the same Rev. John Codman against the liberal opinions of the time. The burden of his early preaching was, in no slight degree, "the guilt of sin, the depravity of human nature, the danger of impenitent sinners, the glories of the divine character, and the riches of redeeming grace." "So solemnly and tenderly did he preach on these and kindred subjects, and so forcibly and pungently did he apply them to his hearers that some of his people, it was said, began to be alarmed lest he would come out, as they expressed their fears, 'a rigid Hopkinsian.'"

There was no schism in these particulars between his pulpit utterance and his self-communion as this found expression in the journal he so diligently kept, and which, even as partially printed, lays bare to us the recesses of his inmost soul. "It becomes men," we read, "to weep, to feel true, hearty sorrow at sin itself, to abhor and condemn themselves as without excuse, to feel themselves dependent on the free, unmerited, unobligated,

[1] See "Dr. Channing's Progress," in *Christian Register*, March 8, 1883, and Gillett's "Unitarian Controversy," *Historical Magazine*, April, 1871, pp. 251, 252. Best of all, I have the entire sermon, as originally published, in a volume of sermons of the time, preserved by Dr. George R. Noyes and given to me by his son, Rev. Charles Noyes, of Andover, Mass.

sovereign grace for pardon and renewal." Similarly, "Every man must be new-born, have a new heart, a new principle, end, motive, disposition, a change by the spirit into a meek, submissive, self-renouncing, self-abhorred, benevolent state of soul, before he can believe, approve, choose the gospel, and receive the kingdom of heaven." Everywhere in his journal of this period his temper, whatever his theology, is that of the Puritan ascetic, the Calvinistic saint. It was more genial, further on, when Fénelon drew him as to a brother's heart. Then, looking back, he saw that he had made a tyrant of his conscience and had served it as a slave. Only relatively to this condition did he ever attain to joyous freedom. His beatitude, Dr. Furness said, was that of those who mourn.

When Channing had arrived at perfect self-possession, it was vain to look for his completest self-expression in his theological sermons and discussions. It was yet vainer to do this in the first years of his ministry, before his theology had been moralized, when that and his best aspirations stood over against each other in mutual isolation and hostility. In the "Memoir" and other sources we find expressions corresponding to those years that have abiding excellence and charm. These were not so much anticipations of the nobler sentiments of his maturest growth as they were exponents of his moral continuity, the insurgence of that faith in human nature which had come to him under the Cambridge willows, which grew

with his growth and strengthened with his strength, and was fortified by those loved writers whom he had taken for his guides, Hutcheson, Ferguson, and Price, sometimes obscured by the Hopkinsian cloud, but never wholly lost. And he was never an active propagandist of his darker views. Sermons like that of the Codman ordination were infrequent ebullitions. In general he avoided controversy and those who loved to stir up its inglorious dust. He was content to leave the outlines of his Theology, Christology, and Soteriology indistinct, so long as they circumscribed for him an ethical and spiritual reality; and he insisted that vital Christianity was not dependent on a strictness of construction which the New Testament did not disclose.

If the Fatherhood of God had not assumed that dominance with him it afterward enjoyed, it had already a peculiar prominence for him: —

> No character could bring God so nigh as this of the Father. . . . I fear it has been the influence of many speculations of ingenious men on the Divine character to divest God of that paternal tenderness which is of all views most suited to touch the heart. . . . Is it not the character of a perfect man that the happiness of others is his own, that he knows no higher joy than to confer and to witness felicity, that his heart responds to the feelings of those around him? And if this is perfect in man, can it be an imperfection in God? (1811.)

This argument *ad hominem* was anthropomorphic certainly, but that it was a favorite one with

Jesus — "If ye then, being evil," etc. — was for Channing a sufficient recommendation. How gentle the reprehension of the New England Calvinism in the above passage! In the same spirit is his deflection from the traditional line of vicarious atonement: —

> Mercy is an essential attribute of God, not an affection produced in him by a foreign cause. His blessings are free, bestowed from a real love of his creatures, — not purchased from him and bestowed by another on those whose welfare he disregards. [Nevertheless] his very character as the universal Father obliges him to punish and humble the disobedient, selfish, unjust, proud, and impure, to redress every principle and practice opposed to the order and happiness and perfection of his creatures. (1811.)

In this last and similar passages I have fancied that he might be girding at the Universalism which was at this time making a lively stir in the community, and of which, especially of Ballou's improvement upon Murray, Channing had no adequate knowledge and appreciation. And when he bids men not confound the love of God with "the ravings of enthusiasm," he had probably the Methodists in mind, and was speaking from that side of his culture which had been nourished by Charles Chauncy and other critics of the Great Awakening. Channing often used the word "enthusiasm" in connections that are convincing that the word had not acquired for him its modern sense, but was equivalent, as commonly in the eighteenth century,

to fanaticism.[1] As early as 1805 we have one of those expressions which had a perennial freshness in his thought: —

> Religion is the rectification of the soul; it is inward health; it is the direction of the affections to the most interesting objects. It consists of feelings and dispositions which include everything generous, disinterested, sympathetic, and pure. . . . When one is growing in religion he converts more and more the common pursuits of life into means of piety and goodness, and makes them the way to heaven.

If Channing had been one of the quoters, as he was not, and he had had Keble's "Christian Year" at hand, which was not published till 1827, he would certainly have quoted here: —

> The trivial round, the common task,
> Will furnish all we ought to ask:
> Room to deny ourselves, a road
> To bring us daily nearer God.

Already in much that touches spiritual growth we have a nice fore-feeling of Bushnell's "Christian Nurture." Conversion is regarded as a process, and the influences of a Christian home as being a better introduction to the Christian life than any catastrophic spiritual experience. Already, too, there is such praise of intellectual honesty as rings in the braver man that was to be: —

> It is a quality of character without which the most splendid talents are of little avail. . . . Perhaps it in-

[1] Professor Woodberry, with perfect justice, finds enthusiasm one of the three distinguishing notes of Channing's complete and final character; the others, rectitude and sensibility.

cludes more magnanimity, courage, and self-denial than any other virtue. Multitudes have dared to face death on the field of battle, who have yet wanted strength and spirit to oppose their own and others' prejudices. (1811.)

He pleads for a careful cultivation of "the art of meditation" which, to his maturer apprehension, was something as different from that revery which had despoiled his youth as the ship's course, obedient to her helm, is from the aimless drifting of the derelict upon the trackless sea. Of this art he was already master, for close and steady application of his mind to the great problems, as by him conceived, not shamed by Amiel or Joubert, much less by Senancour, whose sentimental meditation always verged upon that revery which is the abandonment of self-control.

When he speaks of Jesus, the emphasis is on his moral grandeur rather than upon his special nature or peculiar gifts. That human nature was glorified in him is a recurrent note which seems to require his pure humanity for its logical accuracy, but Channing was not always the logician, and it is certain that his conception of Jesus at this time was not Socinian, or more purely humanitarian, but Arian. "It is an argument in favor of Jesus Christ," he says, "that he appeared in a character altogether new." In due time we shall find him leaving this position leagues behind.[1] There is

[1] See W. C. Gannett's *Ezra Stiles Gannett*, p. 218, where we have Dr. Gannett's comment on Dr. Channing's sermon of January 5, 1840.

much insistence on "the simplicity of Christ." Christianity "is a plain, perspicuous religion, and suited to the comprehension and the wants of all classes of society. A universal religion ought to have the clearness and brightness of the sun." This is a very characteristic note, which had for its objective the orthodox delight in the mystery of the trinity, atonement, and "the decrees." The true Church is the body of "Christ's friends and followers *who truly imbibe his spirit*, no matter by what name they are called, in what house they worship, by what peculiarities of mode and opinion they are distinguished, under what sky they live, or what language they speak." With this forecast of that unsectarian spirit which was to animate his full-grown powers with a peculiar ardor and delight we have abundant promise of that conception of religion as the reformation of society which was in its completeness, perhaps, his most significant anticipation of our present aspirations and ideals. What he wrote of party spirit should be "appointed to be read in churches" at the beginning of every political campaign. He denounced it as "the worst enemy of free governments, the one from which we have most to fear."

You may look to any man for fairness of mind and sensibility to truth rather than to a confirmed partisan. He gives up his reason, his dignity as a rational being to his party. Party spirit has as fatal effects on the heart as on the understanding. The man who surrenders himself to the interests of his party becomes a

malignant man. Irritation becomes the habit of his mind. . . . Look anywhere for candor, generosity, and tenderness rather than to the breast of a partisan. (1812.)

When war was declared against Great Britain in 1812, Massachusetts appointed a day of public fast, and Channing improved the occasion with a sermon which was the flattest treason, if it be treason, as we have recently been taught, to oppose any war in which our country happens to be engaged. Channing, then and always, conceived that it was the highest and most patriotic duty to denounce an unjust war, by whomsoever waged. Nevertheless, his judgment of the war of 1812 may have taken its color unduly from the Massachusetts Federalism of the time, which fell far below Channing's standard of disinterested benevolence.

Above the general range of Channing's thought and speech during the first decade of his ministry soared the high peak of his passionate engagement with the idea of perfection as man's proper goal.

Do you ask in what this perfection consists?

I answer in *knowledge*, in *love*, and in *activity*. The mind devoted to these ends is as happy as it is perfect. Its happiness partakes of the purity and serenity of the divine felicity. Now this I conceive is the end of God, to bring his rational offspring to this perfect and blessed state, to give them the widest, clearest, and brightest views, to give them the strongest, purest, most disinterested love, and to form them to the most vigorous and efficient exertion of all their powers in the promotion of the best designs. (1810.)

I cannot end my account of Channing's early ministry upon a better note than this, or one more characteristic of the man. That word "activity" recurs with significant frequency. The conception to which it is related unifies Channing's life and work as perfectly as any, while at the same time it anticipates that energistic view of ethics which avoids the defects of the utilitarian view, and does not leave ethics where the intuitionalist leaves it — hanging in mid-air. This view is at once as new as Friedrich Paulsen's "System of Ethics," whose main doctrine is that the will does not aim at *pleasure*, but at definite concrete *activity*, and as old as Aristotle, who wrote (what Channing might have written), "The highest good of man consists in the exercise of the energies and excellences of the soul, especially the most perfect." Apart from Channing's too simple and mechanical theology, nothing is more obvious than his large anticipation of our best recent thought; if I should not say his large expression of that better thought which is at once the oldest and the latest born, the common wisdom of all those who have meditated most profoundly on the origin, the destiny, and the business of the human soul.

CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION AND REACTION

THE Federal Street Society had its parsonage on Berry Street, in the rear of the meeting-house, and to this, in the fall of 1803, Channing invited his mother, with his younger brothers and sisters, so urgently and so adroitly that the Newport house and garden were given up and a family migration to Boston was assured. How could they refuse him when his rooms were so empty, his wood-pile heaped in vain, his heart an aching void? He and Francis had agreed that one or the other of them should remain a bachelor until the other children were grown up and the mother without anxiety as to their education and support, and William now assumed the burden of this contract and left his brother free. With something of the wisdom of the serpent, or, if one prefers, the shrewdness of the saints, he invested his kindness with an air of gratefulness for the benefits which he expected to derive from this arrangement. His petty salary ($1200), at which the young candidate of to-day would look askance, however moderate his gifts, then seemed to Channing "the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of

avarice," and he addressed himself carefully to prevent the accumulation of an unnecessary hoard. His board was definitely fixed and regularly paid, and what remained was, for the most part, intrusted to his mother for "her safe-keeping," which meant her use in so far as she could be persuaded to that end. His sisters, too, were made to feel that they were only doing their duty when they relieved him of his wedding fees, those burdensome additions to his stated recompense of reward. A relative tells how grieved he was that he had only fifty dollars with which to buy her a wedding present, but here we seem to have quite as much a naïve expression of her generous expectancy as a proof of his distressing lack of funds. If he had already ceased to pride himself on his bad health, he still had his silly side in the management of his physical life. He was as much afraid as ever of self-indulgence, and hence took for his study the smallest room in the house, while a much better one was crying to be used, and for his sleeping-room the attic, which was ill furnished, cheerless, cold, and every way ill suited to the condition of his health. Sometimes, when this pressed him hard, he was driven into more comfortable quarters; but on the first sign of improvement, he beat a masterly retreat upon his favorite position. Only the perfect neatness of his dress redeemed its lack of style and quality. Happily there was an exuberance of spirits in other members of the family that prevented them from being sicklied o'er

with the pale cast of William's gravity, if it did not do anything to enliven his habitual mood, so painfully aloof, so introspective and absorbed. His mother's lively sallies contrasted sharply with his inviolable calm. It is conceivable that one of these produced that momentary ruffling of the waters when he cried, "Pray stop, for if you go on, I shall feel bound to repeat every word to the person of whom you are speaking." After that, there must have been silence in the domestic heaven for the space of half an hour.

The early years of Channing's ministry were stirring times in the political field. They coincided with the triumph of Democracy, than which Theodore Dwight, brother of Timothy, could conceive "nothing more dreadful this side of hell;" the Embargo, which infuriated the commercial mind of Massachusetts; the war of 1812, with which it had no sympathy; while still the ship of state forged bravely on her destined track, much buffeted, but little swerved. Channing's Federalism was ingrained too deep to be easily eradicated, and his social setting tended to increase its violence, but the grave justness of his mind preserved him from the extravagance of thought and speech that was the general note. In his war sermon of 1816 and in his "Examiner" article, "The Union," of 1829, we have his calmer retrospection on the events which in their course might well have hurried him into irrational speech. For judgment on his temper in the thickest of the trouble we have

his sermon of 1812, preached on the Fast Day which was Massachusetts' comment on the declaration of war. Much of it was devoted to an attempt to allay the harsher passions of the time. But he did not anticipate that conception of *lèse majesté* which has recently found favor in men's eyes. He said: —

> Rulers are not to be viewed with a malignant jealousy; but they ought to be inspected with a watchful, undazzled eye. Their virtues and services are to be rewarded with generous praise, and their crimes and arts and usurpations should be exposed with a fearless sincerity. . . . Freedom of opinion, of speech, and of the press, is our most valuable privilege, the very soul of republican institutions, the safeguard of all other rights.

We seem to be reading much more modern history when we come to his reply to those who would have had criticism silent in the midst of arms: —

> The cry has been that war is declared, and all opposition should therefore be hushed. A sentiment more unworthy of a free country can hardly be propagated. . . . Admit this doctrine, let rulers once know that, by placing the country in a state of war, they place themselves beyond the only power they dread, the power of free discussion, and we may expect war without end. Our peace and all our interests require that a different sentiment should prevail.

Many things were happening in theological as well as in political circles, during the first dozen years of Channing's ministry. Doubtless these

had their effect upon Channing, though his disposition was to keep himself as far as possible from the madding crowd of controversial theologians. His own theology was steadily becoming less Calvinistic under the influence of improving health and an environment of domestic cheerfulness, together with the subjection of the special doctrines of Calvinism to the purifying flame of his great central conception of the Fatherhood of God. Two things that touched him very closely marked the years 1811, 1812: the first, hopefully and cheerfully, Thacher's installation; the second, Buckminster's death, with profound melancholy and regret. Thacher had read theology under Channing's supervision; Channing gave him the right hand of fellowship at his ordination, and their mutual affection was complete. "Heaven can hardly bestow on me," said Channing, "a greater blessing than the friendship of Thacher." During the brief term of Thacher's ministry (six years), the promise of his ability and influence was hardly less than Channing's during the same period, and it was much greater, apparently, than Channing's in the six years between his and Thacher's ordination.[1] But the younger Buckminster was a

[1] W. C. Gannett calls Thacher "the Harry Percy" of the young liberals, and that there was in him some joy of battle is shown by his attack on Andover and its ambiguous creed (1809). His literary, theological, and controversial activity covered thirteen years, six of these in advance of his ordination, while he was conducting the *Monthly Anthology*, teaching in the Boston Latin School, and holding the post of librarian in Harvard College.

luminary who outshone them both while they all hung together in the Boston sky. Settled two years in advance of Buckminster, Channing was of slower growth in liberal ideas, if I should not rather say that his early growth was, for a time, arrested by the personal influence of Hopkins, and a state of health which gave his thought a Calvinistic flow. Buckminster was a far more brilliant preacher, a much abler scholar, singularly beautiful in face and form, with such a voice as Boston had not known, — his literary taste and judgment and manner of writing the delight of the Anthology Club and the chief ornament of the "Monthly Anthology" (1804–11); his social graces excelled only by a piety as of one who had acquaintance with invisible things. As I compare his with Channing's early sermons, I find less difference of thought than of style, and Buckminster's style less ornate as compared with Channing's than the tradition, formed, perhaps, on his Phi Beta Oration, had led me to conceive. It is more remarkable for its purity than for its richness. It has more vigor than Channing's and less stream. It is not a whit more literary in the sense of being marked by literary allusion and quotation. Emerson had not yet come to educate the young men with his quoting manner, as he had been educated by Plutarch and Montaigne. In a volume of Buckminster's sermons, I find only two verse quotations, each of two lines, and not one prose quotation, except from the Bible. Buckminster's more striking

effect must have been owing to his graces of person, voice, and manner, and his more cheerful tone. "After his death," says Mr. Henry Adams, "Unitarians learned to regard William Ellery Channing as their most promising leader." There is a hint of disparagement in that expression, and it is significant of a tendency of which I seem to have encountered a good deal from first to last. Buckminster was, in fact, preëminently the founder of literary Boston, and the first of that coterie of Boston ministers whom O. B. Frothingham has described so happily in his "Boston Unitarianism," — Frothingham's father one of the most typical. Buckminster celebrated that marriage of Unitarianism with Literature, the offspring of which have been so numerous and so honorable to the parental stock. Edward Everett succeeded him at Brattle Street with promise of an equal pulpit fame, but was quickly drawn away from the ministry to a life of literature and politics. It does not seem unlikely that Buckminster would have anticipated his course if he had lived a little longer. He had been appointed shortly before his death to the Dexter professorship of Biblical Criticism in Harvard College, a position for which he was eminently fitted by his Greek and Hebrew studies. Had a full measure of years been granted him, and had he given to his preaching all his strength, I cannot but believe that Channing would have much the same historical preëminence that he has now. Buckminster's would have been the greater literary

name; Channing's the greater in religion. His was the deeper note, an ethical passion to which Buckminster did not attain. But there was to be no generous rivalry of their maturer powers. Buckminster's brief ministry was overclouded by that dreadful malady (epilepsy) which, in June, 1812, suddenly put out the light of reason, and in a few days the light of life. His father, as fine a spirit, clinging to the faith from which his son had grown away, died twenty-four hours later in Vermont. A fearful thunderstorm swept over the village where he lay awaiting death, and a few hours later over Boston, but it bore no message on its wings. The message went the other way. On the morning of the 10th, the elder Buckminster said to his wife, "My son is dead." There was no knowledge of his sickness to suggest the faithful intuition. Channing, with the help of Mr. Thacher, selected a volume of the son's sermons for publication, and did his best to justify the preacher's fame. The choice must have been difficult, for there was a remarkable evenness in the flow of Buckminster's sermonic thought.

And now, as we approach the time (1815) when the deep calm of Channing's life was to be swept by a strong wind of controversy, and the quiet of his meditation was to be invaded by interests and passions foreign to his natural inclination, it becomes necessary to go back for a considerable stretch along the way New England thought had come and note the antecedents that prepared for

the Unitarian controversy on the local scene. Back of every beginning in thought or action there is another of less obvious character, and for the beginnings of that Unitarianism, or liberal Christianity, of which Channing was the leading spirit, we must go back quite to the beginning of the New England settlement. We must, indeed, go back much further, — to the sources from which early English Arians and Socinians, as well as those of New England, drew their widening stream. So far as these were Spanish and Italian they have been exhibited by Professor Bonet-Maury in his "Early Sources of English Unitarian Christianity," with immense learning and ardor of conviction, and the statues of Valdes and Ochino are appropriately crowned. Beyond these the thread that stretched back to Arius and the New Testament, however tenuous, was never wholly lost. The blood of the Waldenses and the Albigenses reddened it. The same thread stretching forward was tried as by fire when certain Baptists out of Holland were burned by Henry VIII. in 1535 for denying the doctrine of the Trinity. The theory of several concurrent beginnings of the English Unitarian development is more reasonable than any bent too eagerly on simplifying the account of this. The Protestant revolution was a spring wind, dancing like a psaltress on the hard sods of the traditional belief, and many a heresy sprang flower-like where it passed. If we go for Unitarian beginnings preëminently to Servetus and the Socini, Lælius and Faustus, a

more careful search will discover them under the shadow of more unsuspected names. Calvin was too good a critic not to recognize the absence from the New Testament of any specific doctrine of the Trinity, and his friend Farel, who superintended the burning of Servetus, omitted the Trinity from his "Summary" of things necessary to salvation, while Luther, omitting the word Trinity from his liturgy, wrote, "This name Trinity is never found in the Scriptures, but men have devised and invented it" as "a heavenly matter which the world cannot understand," and, setting themselves to explain which, "the schools have become fools." But Erasmus, of quite different temper, was a more fertile source of anti-trinitarian thought, though he was not himself frankly committed to that thought. His revised New Testament Text and Annotations were an armory from which "the Dutch and English Anabaptists, who disowned for the most part the doctrine of the Trinity" (*sic* Martineau), drew out the weapons of their Unitarian and Arminian warfare against the received theology.

To go further into this matter is to be convinced with Martineau that the English Bible exerted a more powerful influence than any individual or sect in spreading Unitarian belief. The dullest could but note the enormous gulf that widened between the vociferous Trinitarianism of the mass, the rosary, the creeds, the liturgies, and the silence of the New Testament. The more exaggerated the Trinitarianism of the ecclesiastical forms, the more

conspicuous and impressive was the difference of the New Testament therefrom. Shutting the Prayer Book with its "Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, three Persons in One God," they opened the New Testament at the surprising words, "To us there is One God, the Father." As here so everywhere. No such fount of heresy was ever opened in a barren land as that which flowed in Wiclif's translation of the Bible, and later in Tyndale's and Coverdale's and the next of kin.

It is absurd to view the English and American development of Unitarianism before Channing's time as distinct and separate forms of a theological evolution, one merely influencing the other, and that one the English exclusively. English theology was American theology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, American theology was Engglish. Sometimes the American end of the strenuous team was in the lead and sometimes the other. If America furnished no such names to the liberal tendency as Milton's and Locke's and Newton's and Samuel Clarke's, England furnished no such protagonist of orthodoxy as Jonathan Edwards. There was constant interchange of thought and books between the mother country and the colony. Tracking the course of the English development by the light of burning heretics, that guidance fails us after 1612, when Bartholomew Legate and Edward Wightman, both Unitarians of the Arian type, went to the stake, and were the last to suffer in that way. About the same time Emlyn

was subjected to a heavy fine and long imprisonment for privately holding similar views. In 1697, Aikenhead, an Edinburgh University student, eighteen years old, was put to death for saying that "god-man" was as absurd as "goat-stag" or "square-round." If the boy was not a representative Unitarian, the killing was very strictly representative of the place and time. It was a company of persecuted Irish Presbyterians that found its way to Boston in 1729 and dedicated a barn to the praise and glory of God, built a church on Long Lane (afterward Federal Street) in 1744, and about 1787 assumed the Congregational form of government, so building up the pulpit in which Channing was to stand in God's good time.

It is one thing to show that Boston Unitarianism was not a graft upon the English Priestley-Belsham stock, and another to prove it an indigenous growth. There were Unitarians before Belsham and Priestley, — notably Clarke, Newton, Milton, Locke; and there were others, contemporary with them, who were not of their Socinian mind, — Dr. Richard Price among them, than whom no one affected Channing's thinking more profoundly.[1] However questionable the shape of English Unitarianism (Socinianism) to Channing and the main body of his friends, their liberalism struck its roots deep down into a soil that had been wonderfully enriched by such fertilizing books as

[1] In strange contrast with Martineau's early indifference to him. See Drummond's *Life of Martineau*, ii. 263.

those of Emlyn, Whiston,[1] Taylor[2] of Norwich, Samuel Clarke, Locke, Newton, Lardner, Price, Priestley, Watts, Lindsey, and many others, some of them Arians, some of them Socinians, some of them modifying the conceptions so designated with personal accentuations.

The first troubles of the New England churches were ecclesiastical, but those caused by Mrs. Hutchinson's Antinomianism were doctrinal, and they came very soon (1637). The first heretic who tended to Unitarian doctrine has a statue in Springfield, Mass., one of the finest works St. Gaudens has produced. It is the statue of William Pynchon. It was not erected to him as a Unitarian heretic, but as the founder of the town. His book, "The Meritorious Price of our Redemption," was answered by John Norton by direction of the General Court. It was also burned in the marketplace, and Pynchon was fined one hundred pounds. To avoid the infliction of some sterner penalty he took

[1] For all these see Leslie Stephen's *English Thought*, Tayler's *Religious Life of England*, Allen's *Unitarianism since the Reformation*, Bonet-Maury's *Early Sources of English Unitarianism*, Brooke Herford's *Religion in England*.

[2] It is interesting that John Taylor of Norwich (to be distinguished from Henry Taylor, vicar of Portsmouth, another Arian, author of a ponderous *Apology* for Christianity), whose octagon church excited Wesley's admiration, did much to create that tradition of liberalism in Norwich into which Martineau was born, and that in Dublin, his first parish, Martineau was a colleague of Taylor's venerable grandson. Dr. John Taylor was in his later years the first principal of that Warrington Academy from which Manchester New College, of which Martineau was for a long time principal, was evolved.

himself off to England, wherein, as he was dealing with the same people who hung Mary Dyer and other Quakers seven and eight years later, he was doubtless wise. The institution of the Halfway Covenant[1] in 1662 was a sign that already the non-church-members of the community were numerous, in its turn a sign that doctrinal laxity had set in. That the "Confession of 1680" was not made binding on the churches, and was accepted by few of them, if it marks no increase of liberal opinions, marks that independence of the individual churches which was ultimately the charter of societies that had become Unitarian to mind their own business and expect no interference. Solomon Stoddard, grandfather of Jonathan Edwards and pastor of the Northampton Church from 1669 to 1729, was for a long time the most influential preacher in the Connecticut valley. He made the Halfway Covenant less binding by admitting non-regenerate but earnest-minded members of the churches to the Lord's Supper (1706). One need not be a conscious saint to partake of this, only a seeker for the Christian life. Here was a step towards Bushnell's, which was first Channing's if not Fénelon's doctrine of Christian Nurture and the Educational Church. If it was true that Stoddard was ordained unregenerate and was converted at the Lord's Supper, there was a strong personal equation in his argument. It converted many ministers and churches,

[1] Admitting to baptism children of baptized parents who were not professing Christians, but of sober and reputable life.

but not Jonathan Edwards, who in 1750 broke himself in his attempt to reverse the Stoddardean innovation and was driven out, to find among the Stockbridge Indians leisure to write his treatise on the "Freedom of the Will."

The course of the debate has no clearer witness than the annual Convention Sermon. If one year this leaned to the liberal side, there was sure to be a counterblast the next. It is probable that a little heresy went a great way in stirring up such pure minds as those of Cotton Mather by way of reprisals. He lamented the "deplorable degeneracy" of his fellow ministers who were reading Whiston and Samuel Clarke, "a far more dangerous abettor of that damnable error," Arianism. In the Convention Sermon of 1722, he comes to the rescue of the Trinitarian doctrine, with all the italics and exclamation points in the printer's font. He demands, What has this glorious mystery done "to deserve Excommunication from the House of our God?" Let that go and "the Glorious God will himself be gone; yea, be gone *far* from a forsaken *Sanctuary*." In the summer of 1726, the Rev. Mr. Williams preached to the same effect, incited mainly by the anti-Trinitarian movement going on among English and Irish Presbyterians, and by the sympathy manifested towards this in New England, and the possible infection of the Irish Presbyterians coming to Long Lane. In the summer of 1743, Nathaniel Appleton brings a like railing accusation, yet must he have been feared by the more

sternly orthodox as a Danaan bringing gifts, for he denounced theological systems and the endeavor to "make everything quadrate with a particular scheme," as tending to "darken rather than enlighten some Christian doctrines." Here was a foregleam of Channing and his kind, also of Hampden at Oxford, who in 1835 excited Newman to unseemly wrath. Mr. Appleton's uneven progress was profoundly typical of the general aspect of the century as theologically conditioned. There was little all-round heresy, and no more consistency in the holding of particular views. Here the advance was along the Arminian, there along the Socinian or Arian line; oftenest along Mr. Appleton's, — a dislike of systematic theology, tending to a dislike of "man-made creeds," and an insistence on the Christian life as superior to these, or independent of them. Channing's personal experience exhibited the general course of the advance, much as a mountain's heightening altitudes do the extended zones of the earth's surface. As he was first anti-Trinitarian, then anti-creed-and-system-mongering, then anti-Calvinistic, and finally opposed to such less distinctly Calvinistic doctrines as those of vicarious atonement and eternal punishment, so, in a general way, was the New England theological mind. There was much variety, and there were some queer combinations. It was customary for the heresy hunters to hold those who offended in the least particular to have offended in all, and men were called Arminians or Socinians or Arians according

as one title or the other seemed likeliest to stick or stain. Time and again the protagonist of orthodoxy found himself convicted of heresy in the very act of trying to convict some brother minister. Indeed such was the refinement of the dogmatic system that a man could hardly think about it at all without slipping over the dangerous verge. Dr. Hopkins was to the elder Buckminster a very grievous heretic, and Jonathan Edwards probably did more than any one in the eighteenth century, except possibly Whitefield, to bring in the Unitarian day. For Edwards was nothing if not rationalist, his chief end to give the system of Calvin a reasonable appearance. No man could think so powerfully and acutely as Edwards did and not set many others to thinking after the fashion of Abraham's going out from Haran — not knowing whither. Emerson has not exaggerated the possibilities entailed "when God lets loose a thinker on the planet." Moreover, Edwards insisted stoutly on the right of the new generations to revise the thinking of the old. He said, as if he had set Milton's trumpet to his lips, "He who believes principles because our forefathers affirm them makes idols of them, and it would be no humility, but baseness of spirit, for us to judge ourselves incapable of examining principles which have been handed down to us."

It was in 1734 that Edwards's dread of the Arminian invasion roused him to the pitch of those terrible sermons which produced the Great Awaken-

ing of the following year, which in its turn incited Whitefield to cross the ocean in 1740, to sow New England with the wheat and tares of an enthusiastic piety and party strife. His several visits mark the stages of a great recoil from his theology and from the exaggerations of his fiery zeal, and when he died on his last visit (1770), the reaction still went on, assisted by the disintegrating influences attendant on the Revolutionary War. Between Whitefield's first visit and his second, in 1744, a critical temper had set in, to which Edwards's "Thoughts" on the Revival, and Chauncy's "Seasonable Thoughts," had contributed the weightier part. Before Whitefield's next coming (1754), the reaction had so gathered strength that it had swept Edwards from his Northampton pulpit in temporary "disgrace with fortune and men's eyes."[1] But it would be a mistake to regard the liberal tendencies of the half century, 1750–1800, as mainly the result of a reaction from the Great Awakening and the Whitefield revivals. These dramatic events did something to retard, much to accelerate the pace of liberal theology, but this went on in spite of them or because of them, much as it would have done if they had not intervened.

[1] But Yale and Harvard were already going different ways, and while Whitefield was received coldly in Cambridge on his third visit, at New Haven the college president "received him as if he were a gentleman" (the second pronoun is ambiguous), — the same president who at first repelled him violently and expelled the saintly Brainerd because of his too active sympathy with him.

They made the process of amelioration more irregular; they did not seriously affect its general course and end, except when rising from the dead in the last decade of the century and the first decade of the next, when there was that very positive reaction from the conditions brought about by two centuries of gradual evolution which names this chapter of my book.

Two men stand out from all others in the earlier stages of the revolt from Whitefield's Calvinism and his disorganizing zeal, — Charles Chauncy, of the First Church in Boston, and Jonathan Mayhew, of the West Church. In one particular these bore no likeness to Whitefield's description of the New England clergy as "dumb dogs, half devils and half beasts, unconverted, spiritually blind, and leading their people to hell." They were not dumb dogs. Chauncy's "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England" (1743) is agreed to have been the most effective criticism made on Whitefield and his friends. It claimed for a diligent use of the ordinary means of grace a more efficient operation than that of revivalism, with its spasms of sense and sensibility. In the next decade there was a great battle incidental to the long war of the Whitefieldians and their opponents, in which Chauncy took a general's part, convicting one of the Calvinists, Clark of Danvers, of plain disloyalty to Calvin in his declaration that the fate of children dying in infancy may be left to "the secret Things which belong to God

alone." Calvinism required that they should, except as specially elect, suffer the utmost penalty of Adam's sin. Mayhew was diligent in republishing Emlyn's and other English Unitarian books. He was one of the most vigorous of those denouncing human creeds as tests of doctrinal soundness, the sole proper test being "the infallible word of God." (In general the liberal temper was intensely scriptural.) He was not without a pretty gift of satirical writing, contending that "nonsense and contradictions can never be too sacred to be ridiculous." "A burning faggot," he said, "may set our bodies in a light blaze, but it has no tendency to illuminate the understanding." "A blow with a club may fracture a man's skull, but I suppose he will not think and reason the more clearly for that, though he may possibly believe the more orthodoxly after his brains are knocked out than while he continues in his senses." Till the revivalists "have lost all *human understanding* they think it impossible they should get a *divine one*." Mayhew is set down by his biographer as "the first Clergyman in New England who expressly and openly opposed the scholastic doctrine of the Trinity." As to the nature of Christ he was more Arian than Socinian, but preferred to leave this matter where it is left by the New Testament, — not sharply defined. Lemuel Briant,[1] of Braintree, did about

[1] See Charles Francis Adams's account of Briant in *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History*, which is, however, strangely defective through the absence of any mention of Briant's Uni-

as much as Chauncy or Mayhew to turmoil the churches. From the title of a sermon which he preached in 1749, and from that of one of the opposing screeds, we get a clear impression of the acrid humors of the time. Briant's title was, "The Absurdity and Blasphemy of depretiating (*sic*) Moral Virtue," and the answering one, "The Absurdity and Blasphemy of substituting the personal Righteousness of Men in the Room of the Surety-Righteousness of Christ in the important Article of Justification before God."

But the liberal theology was a sporadic growth, appearing sometimes where there was least sign of any careful sowing. In New Hampshire, wrote Dr. Bellamy, the liberals had "got things so ripe that they had ventured to new model our *Shorter Catechism*, to alter or entirely leave out the *doctrines of the Trinity*, of the *Decrees*, of *our first parents being created holy*, of *original sin*, *Christ satisfying divine justice*, *effectual calling*, *justification*, etc., and to adjust the whole to *Dr. Taylor's* scheme." Edwards at Stockbridge, too deep in his "Original Sin" to rise to the occasion, besought his son-in-law, President Burr of Princeton, father of the redoubtable Aaron, to join battle with the enemy. Burr did so in a treatise on the "Deity of Christ," which was published in Boston, as if to

versalism. The account is incidental to a history of the Braintree church, a typical example of the ecclesiastical evolution, and, as such, deserving attention. It is interesting to imagine how Mr. Adams would have made the chips fly from the old blocks if he had lived a century or two ago.

beard the roaring Mayhew in his den. Mayhew was a prime mover of the political revolution, and in 1767 surrendered his pulpit to Simeon Howard, who was denounced as viewing the doctrine of the Trinity as "an antiquated doctrine, very unfashionable and unmodish; the high mode to laugh at it." The next year Hopkins preached a strong Trinitarian sermon there "under a conviction that the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was much neglected, if not disbelieved by a number of the ministers in Boston." In 1780 — I quote Dr. Peabody — there was only one Calvinist preacher in Boston, the minister of Brattle Street (Samuel Cooper); he with a liberal congregation, while Eckley of the Old South Church was a liberal with an orthodox congregation. Such mixtures were not uncommon, and generally the people in the pews were more radical than the ministers in the pulpits, an interesting comment on the charge of timid reticence which was brought against the ministers a little later, and which has persisted till our time. The first President Adams, a parishioner of Lemuel Briant, could count many Unitarian ministers besides his own as early as 1750, and lawyers, physicians, tradesmen, and farmers, in blocks of various size. Mr. Gannett's estimate [1] of the two special

[1] In *Ezra Stiles Gannett*, where the account of the Unitarian evolution before Channing is the best I know, and "as interesting as a novel." But see also for this, Allen's *Unitarianism since the Reformation*, Walker's *History of the Congregational Churches*, and Gillett's invaluable *History and Literature of the Unitarian Controversy*, with its bibliography of nearly three hundred titles, a

emphases that were growing stronger all the time, is confirmed by all the literature concerning the period which I have looked into: 1, few fundamentals in religion; 2, no human creeds: only Bible words for Bible mysteries.

Strangely enough the first definite schism was not at any point along the Congregationalist line, where it seemed threatening, but at the fountain-head of New England Episcopacy, King's Chapel, Boston. It is interesting to note that the first English Unitarian to frankly take the Unitarian name was an Episcopalian, the saintly Theophilus Lindsey, whose Essex Place Chapel, London, is now a place "whither the tribes go," the headquarters of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. It was at his torch that James Freeman, grandfather by marriage of James Freeman Clarke, kindled his own. By its light the proprietors of King's Chapel saw their way in 1785 to strike out from the Prayer Book everything savoring of Trinitarian doctrine. For two years Freeman had been their lay reader, and he remained in that office till 1787, when, no bishop being willing to lay his hands upon a head so full of heresy, he received lay ordination at the hands of his vestrymen, in the validity of which Freeman was indoctrinated by a Rev. Mr. Hazlitt in 1784. Mr. Hazlitt was an English clergyman travelling in America, and his son, William Hazlitt, the brilliant essayist, who

monument of diligence and carefulness, needlessly disfigured in some parts.

in due time would be Channing's sharpest critic, was then six years old.[1] Freeman's light was not hid under a bushel, but set on a high candlestick. He was active in the distribution of English Unitarian books, published a "Scripture Confutation of the Thirty-Nine Articles," and negotiated the gift of Priestley's works to Harvard College. The exodus of Boston loyalists during the Revolutionary War had brought King's Chapel to its lowest ebb. When the time came for reconstruction there was young blood in the ascendant whose "moral flow" was away from all things English, the English Church and its formularies included. There were other Episcopal churches which the new wine made, for a time, unsteady in their gait, but they all settled down at length into a genial acquiescence with the traditional forms.[2] Increasingly loved and venerated till his death in 1835, it is probable that Freeman's close alliance with the English (Socinian) Unitarians made him a questionable figure in the eyes of Boston Unitarians of the stricter (Arian) sort.

The minister of the Federal Street Church, from 1787 till his death in 1798, was Jeremy Belknap,

[1] For some account of the elder Hazlitt's stay in America, see Birrell's new life of Hazlitt in *English Men of Letters*, which is, however, weak, as touching his relation to King's Chapel.

[2] See Tiffany's and McConnell's histories of the Episcopal Church in the United States for evidence of the liberal tendencies of Bishop White and many others at the time when their church was setting out on its career of distinct American development. Also, *Annals of King's Chapel*, for an invaluable mine of local ecclesiastical history.

one of our best early historians and founder of the Massachusetts Historical Society. In 1792 he published a Unitarian sermon; in 1794 a life of Watts with that of Doddridge, the purpose of which was, as he frankly confessed, to exhibit Dr. Watts's anti-Trinitarian opinions; in 1795 a "Collection of Psalms and Hymns," in which no hymn or version of a psalm was included that ascribed to Jesus the honor and worship due to God alone.[1] The book was adopted by a good many congregations, and was "a sign to be spoken against" with others. It was one of many straws that showed which way the wind was blowing. But that the differentiation of orthodox and heretic had as yet hardly begun was evident from the fact that the redoubtable Jedidiah Morse, the father of the Unitarian controversy, *par excellence*, collaborated with Dr. Belknap in the making of the book, furnishing the little marks which indicated the sharp key or the flat in which the hymns should be sung.

Meantime, partly parallel with the development I have traced and partly in close affiliation with it, was the development of Universalism. Murray,

[1] The Brooklyn Historical Society has a copy, beautifully bound in red morocco, which was the personal property of Jane Sigourney, who married Frederick A. Farley, whose first pastorate was in Providence, R. I., his second, more than twenty years in length, in Brooklyn, N. Y. All the psalms are versified, and there are three hundred additional hymns. Watts's hymns were not all approved. The prophet Jeremy remarks in his preface that Watts uses terms of endearment in speaking of God with "a disgusting licence."

who died in the very year when Dr. Morse contrived his brilliant artifice for converting heresy into schism (1815), was a Calvinist in his major and minor premises, but drew a different conclusion from that of Edwards and Hopkins: only the elect were saved, but everybody was elect; "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive," as good a text as any controversialist ever found in the whole Bible armory, its edge much dulled by the grinding of Dr. Orello Cone and other modern critics. The early Universalist societies were recruited more in Baptist and Methodist quarters than among the Congregationalists, and on more democratic social lines. The early Unitarians, as socially aristocratic, were naturally averse to a promiscuous salvation. Men might be "born free and equal" (the habitual misquotation), but that they died so was another matter, not to be lightly entertained. There had been Universalist thinking in America before the kindly and lachrymose Murray came over and found a church without a minister awaiting him on the New Jersey shore. Chauncy, of Boston, and Briant, of Braintree (Quincy), whom we have already met, were clearly committed to the humaner creed. Adam Streeter began to preach Universalism in Rhode Island, without having heard of Murray, in 1777. A little later came Elhanan Winchester. In his diary Ezra Stiles compares his book with Chauncy's and finds it much more important. Winchester started from the Arminian side, and Murray, starting from

the Calvinistic, declared that he "knew of nothing further from true Christianity than such Universalism," but, when they met, he could not resist the tender saintliness of Winchester's face and speech.

In 1775 the light of Universalism dawned upon the soul of Caleb Rich, a Baptist Calvinist, kicking against the pricks of an inhuman creed amidst the glory of the New Hampshire hills. He, again, had never heard of Murray. But Rich shines less by his own light than by that reflected back on him from his son in the spirit, Hosea Ballou, of all Universalist chiefs and founders easily the first. When Ballou preached for Murray, who had come from Gloucester to Boston in 1793, Mrs. Murray instigated a hearer to stand up and say, "That is not the doctrine usually preached in this place." And it was not. There was no Calvinism left in it. All the five points were gone, and with them the Trinity and Vicarious Atonement and Adam's Fall, with all mankind upon his back. Ballou's book on the Atonement was published in 1805, when Channing, never Trinitarian, was still entangled in the meshes of the Calvinistic scheme, and it anticipated the full-grown expression of Channing's thought on all its principal lines, with a difference in the way of viewing the relations of the present and the future life. It was Ballou's doctrine that we get our full and just punishment in the body for sins committed in the body. Was this very different from Emerson's doctrine that

the fruit of every action is immediate? It seemed to miss the fact that a man's character is the result of his experience, and himself is hell or heaven as the case may be, and hardly to be made very different by the beneficent event of death, though we now believe much more in the effectiveness of the environment than formerly. But his doctrine in its entirety was an immense correction of the current Calvinism and transformed the Universalism that he found growing where Murray had diligently sowed the seeds and watered them with his tears. From 1790 to 1800 Universalists were a heterogeneous body, some of Murray, some of Winchester, only united in the one glorious idea that at last "every tongue should confess and every knee should bow." By 1815 they had a compact body of ideas, the ideas which Universalism was to express for the next half century. The ideas were One God the Father, Reconciliation of man to God by the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus, the sufficiency of our mortal life for the punishment of its own sins. Ballou was not a learned, not an educated, man, but he knew his one book, the Bible, as well as any man could know it who knew no other. He was a great preacher and he was a greater soul. It was not by exegesis but by humanity that he prevailed. He warmed the heart of the Eternal, as the Calvinists had made him, at his own loving breast. We cannot honor him too much.[1]

[1] See John Coleman Adams's address, "Hosea Ballou," at the Universalist Convention in Buffalo, 1901.

Such movements as this of Ballou's and of Murray's before him, together with the more general tendency to liberal opinions, could not but excite a reaction in the minds of the more conservative representatives of the creed that was being everywhere diminished and assailed. The sense of danger must have been aggravated a great deal by the appearance of Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason" in 1794, and by the vogue to which it speedily attained. Men's agitated nerves so disturbed their vision that to confound Paine's ideas with those of the Boston liberals was most natural. A composite photograph was made of all the liberal and radical doctrines of the time, and with the resulting ogre good clergymen and laymen frightened themselves and each other in a quite dreadful fashion. And indeed there was good ground for fear if the traditional orthodoxy was an ideal construction of the world, deserving of men's love and praise. Something must be done to stay the incoming tide of liberalism, or, continuing to rise as it had risen from 1750 to 1790, there would not be a New England steeple left in sight at the expiration of another period of equal length. Something was done. There was an orthodox reaction.[1] It began about 1790. It forced the Unitarian schism in the course of the next forty years, not putting forth half its strength until twenty-five of these had passed. There never was a quieter or more

[1] For details see Williston Walker's *History of the Congregational Churches in the United States*, chap. ix., pp. 309–369.

natural evolution than that of New England liberalism in the eighteenth century. There never was a more conscious and deliberate reaction than that which thwarted this evolution for a time and divided, until now, the Congregationalist fold. That the men of the reaction were as conscientious and well meaning as the men of the reform needs hardly to be said. That some of them were much more in earnest does not admit of any doubt.

This reaction was intimately associated with the expansion of New England, the overflow of its population into neighboring States, the closer affiliation of New England Congregationalism with the Presbyterianism of New York resulting in the "Plan of Union" (1801); and it was illustrated by a series of revivals, widely extended, an outburst of missionary zeal, and a sharp awakening to the presence and the danger of the liberal development. A local revival in Maine (1791) soon became general throughout New England. A Hartford pastor, using the swollen diction which was the trademark of the time, said of the last decade of the eighteenth century, "I saw a continued succession of heavenly sprinklings . . . in Connecticut, until in 1799 I could stand at my door in New Hartford, . . . and number fifty or sixty congregations laid down in one field of divine wonders, and as many more in different parts of New England." On the tide of this revival came in the new Sunday-school organization, the missionary beginnings of Mills, Newell, and Judson, an exten-

sion of home missionary work, and — the special matter of our immediate concern — a searching of the joints and marrow of all those deliberately opposed or negatively indifferent to the revival, or betraying liberal tendencies in any way, shape, or manner. Into the turmoil of this inquisition many were drawn who did little credit to themselves or to their cause, many who lost little of the beauty of their holiness in the hot and dusty fray, and one who stands out from all others, less because of the ethical nobility and the sainthood which he shared with many upon his own and the opposing side than because of the clean vigor that he brought to the defence of the assailed and his entire and perfect apprehension of the nature and the magnitude of the interests involved. There is little need that I should write his name.

CHAPTER V

THE DIVIDED FOLD

THE year 1815, as significant of the beginning of the Unitarian Controversy, is hardly less precise than the majority of dates commonly accepted as the starting points of great events. Its relative significance, as we shall see, was very great, but we have seen already that the "seeds and weak beginnings" of the liberal thought were germinating all the way along from the early settlement of New England, and pushing through the hard ground into the windy air all through the eighteenth century. Even the schism of the Unitarians from the orthodox body — more properly, perhaps, the schism of the Calvinists from the liberal body — was not a sudden cleft. All the way along from the beginning of the last century, and from farther back, there were signs of a definitive partition of the divided house, — on the one hand the growing strength of the liberal party, on the other an increasing disposition to exclude the liberals from fellowship or to withdraw from their assembly. In the event the schism was predominantly an orthodox schism. Not that the liberals were the main body of Congregationalists (they were so in Bos-

ton and its vicinity, but not far beyond), but that it was the orthodox party that forced the separation, the liberals pleading against it with a pathetic earnestness which the more kindly hearts or less conscientiously dogmatic minds could not withstand. Meantime each side pressed steadily for the advantage, sometimes with equal disregard of that Christian spirit in which their inevitable difference should have been met.

It was now (after 1800) advance and opposition all along the line, the opposition generally the more self-conscious and more vigorous. Just as the century turned, the church in Plymouth, that of the Pilgrim Fathers, became quite definitely Unitarian, the more orthodox of the church proper (the body of communicants) soon afterward withdrawing and setting up for themselves. Generally, as the gulf widened, the "church" was found on one side of it — the orthodox — and the "society," owning the church property, upon the other. Here was a fruitful source of acrimony, with grave injustice perpetrated here and there. Its more profound significance was that with the "church" went often the more spiritual elements to leaven the new lump, — a far-reaching influence. But there were able, shrewd, and active non-church-members of both kinds. Notably the lay founders of the Andover Theological School were men who had not "experienced religion." The action of the Pilgrim Fathers' church was an ominous business. More than a hundred churches of the Puri-

tan founding[1] followed its lead upon the lines of Pastor Robinson's prophecy, "There is more truth yet to break out from God's word." In 1802, Rev. Samuel Worcester was dismissed from the Fitchburg pulpit by the society in opposition to the wishes of the church. He went to Salem and there nursed his wrath for thirteen years, and kept it warm until the striking of his hour. The starting of the "Monthly Anthology" (1803) by the liberal party brought Jedidiah Morse, of Charlestown, to the fore with the "Panoplist," pledged to the use of its full armor for the defence of the beleaguered faith. That Channing sometimes wrote for it was proof that the line of division was not yet sharply drawn, or that he had not yet made his final choice. On both sides the event was seen to be critical when in 1805 Henry Ware was made Hollis Professor of Theology in Harvard College. The college became Unitarian by this act, which excited violent opposition, the redoubtable Morse heading it with a vigorous pamphlet, which was practically the first number of the "Panoplist." There were other reprisals. Eckley, the liberal minister of the Old South, was dead, and the conservative congre-

[1] Notable examples making much noise and causing much excitement at the time were those of John Sherman and Abiel Abbot in Connecticut, where the semi-Presbyterian Consociation made heresy a more punishable offence. Sherman's book (1805) "was the most positive anti-Trinitarian treatise that had yet originated in New England" (*sic* Walker's *Congregational Churches*). For both cases see Gillett's *Unitarian Controversy*, pp. 249, 250; 259–261.

gation, under the guidance of Dr. Morse, chose a strict Calvinist for the succession. Another note of the reaction was the settlement of Codman by the Dorchester society, after the frankest exposition of his Calvinistic views, Channing preaching the ordination sermon and Morse taking part in the service, another sign of the still wavering line of cleavage and of Channing's slow development, his sermon, above mentioned, witnessing. In 1810, Dr. Porter, of Roxbury, had declared, in the Convention Sermon, that of the whole list of orthodox doctrines, including eternal punishment, neither the belief or rejection of one of them was essential to Christian faith and character. What wonder that it seemed necessary to "the party of the other part" to bring a sturdy Calvinist to Boston, from whose preaching sprang the new Park Street Church, built expressly to stand four square to every liberal assault and superheat the controversial air. Mr. Codman's Dorchester congregation soon found that they had reckoned without a sufficient knowledge of their minister. He refused to exchange with liberal ministers, and by a small majority it was voted by the society that "his connection with it had become extinct." Seventy-one male and one hundred and eighty-three female members of the church and society protested vigorously. There was a first council and a second. Another minister was placed in the pulpit, and the approaches to it were guarded against Mr. Codman, who, nevertheless, preached from the lower plat-

form; if simultaneously with the other minister there must have been a confusion of tongues. Finally the moderator's casting vote gave Mr. Codman's side the victory, and all the exclusionists round about took cheerful heart. There were ventures towards a new style of Congregationalism, akin to the Connecticut Consociation, to work the exclusive policy.[1] But not even the most orthodox could be relied on for this retrogression. Nathanael Emmons, stoutest of them all, did more than any one to give it pause. "Association," he maintained, "leads to Consociation, Consociation to Presbyterianism, Presbyterianism to Episcopalianism, and Episcopalianism to Popery." The strength of the liberals was largely in their Congregational tradition. "Protestantism," said Dr. Holmes, "means, Mind your own business." Congregationalism meant the same thing, more clearly. If the congregations were well satisfied with their liberal ministers, it was nobody else's business.

The reaction took on many forms, one of the most obvious the establishment of the Andover Theological Seminary in 1808. This was a counterblast to the accession of Harvard College to the liberals three years before. It was brought about by mutual concessions of the Old Calvinists and

[1] Buckminster wrote Belsham, Feb. 5, 1809, "There is among us an increasing party of Calvinists and Hopkinsians who wish to promote a more *exclusive* union on the basis of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and who will, therefore, form a schism in our Congregational connection and separate from *us*, and probably send delegates to the General Assembly."

Hopkinsians, Leonard Woods, who was something of one kind and the other, and anything against the liberals, furnishing the *callida junctura* of the broken chain. If there had been no liberals forming so strong a party as to make the Hopkinsians and Calvinists fearful of their ability to cope with them alone, we should probably have had a Hopkinsian instead of a Unitarian schism. In New York, where there were no liberals to speak of, the Calvinists dealt with the Hopkinsians as sternly as these rivals, pooling their issues in Massachusetts, dealt with the Unitarians. They declared Hopkinsianism "at war with the philosophy of the human mind, with *common sense*, and with the *word of the living God;*" that it "ought to be exposed and *reprobated* in the most decided manner;" that "*in some very material points* it was ANOTHER GOSPEL." It was "*time they* [the Hopkinsians] *were known* and A LINE OF DISTINCTION DRAWN." They had "gained a reputation far beyond what *nonsense and impiety* should acquire." They were "preparing the way for a more extensive diffusion of *infidel principles and even of atheism* in our country." It takes inappreciable differences to breed the bitterest hostility. Terrible would have been the battle of Old Calvinists and Hopkinsians in Massachusetts but for the common foe and fear. It was no easy matter to compound their differences to the end that they might meet the liberals with an unbroken front. It looked as if there would be one school at Andover and another at Newbury-

port. The danger was so imminent that the Old Calvinists bowed their proud necks to the Hopkinsian yoke. The resulting creed was a piece of theological patchwork of unrivalled intricacy. It aroused young Thacher, not yet a settled minister, to the most drastic bit of writing which has come down to us with his superscription. "This we believe," he said, "to be the first instance of a creed's being originally formed with a designed ambiguity of meaning, with the express intention of permitting men of different opinions to sign it. The circumstance which pollutes the old age of creeds in other countries pollutes the infancy of this." As to the device for securing an unprogressive orthodoxy — the creed to be re-signed every five years by the professors — he said, "It is a yoke too galling to be endured by any man who has felt the difficulty of investigating truth." Apparently this prophecy was not made good. For more than half a century the yoke was found easy enough by such deep scholars and good men as Woods and Porter and Stuart and Park; then it began to chafe and fret; with what results we know. A statute unrepealed, it is only there for lack of all obedience.

And now, before passing on to that series of events which made the year 1815 so memorable in Channing's life and in the history of New England Congregationalism, let us go back a little and see how Channing had been musing that such a fire should burn in those letters and sermons that were

his contribution to that controversy which found the Congregational churches at least formally united and left them, when the storm abated, two distinct bodies of believers, less sadly alienated in their minds than in their hearts.

We have seen that Channing, never a Trinitarian, was during the first years of his ministry not only somewhat evangelical[1] in his thought and temper, but even Calvinistic, the profound influence of Hopkins and his own miserable health conspiring to this end. Yet even the first years of his ministry — even his first sermon! — had intimations of his maturest thought and spirit; and these, not steadily, but with some wavering, became more definite as he settled to his work and found himself obliged to approve some men and things and withstand others, as the liberal sentiments of the community gathered strength and the reaction became more exclusive in its temper and more definite in its aims. What we seem to find very clearly is that he arrived at liberal principles sooner than at Unitarian doctrines; that his larger and more characteristic thoughts anticipated the minor Unitarian expression. A noble confidence in reason, a fear of worse results from its repression or neglect than from its free exercise, distrust of theological precision as making for sectarian division, the insistence upon character as supe-

[1] I use the word here and elsewhere protestingly to express those traditional aspects of orthodoxy which stop short of the five characteristic points of Calvinism.

rior to creed, a lofty faith in the Eternal Fatherhood and in the dignity of human nature, — such was the warp of his religion, while for the woof there was material of quite different, not to say inferior, grade. There was as yet no "wholeness of tissue" in his web of thought. There were giants in those days among his opinions and beliefs, but the traditional conceptions walked in and out between their legs, either unnoticed or tolerated with a certain proud indifference, so confident was he of the superior energy of his essential thought.

> The eagle suffers little birds to sing,
> And is not careful what they mean thereby,
> Knowing that with the shadow of his wing
> He can at pleasure stint their melody.

No feature of Channing's early mind was more prominent than a devout biblicism. He and his liberal friends were much more biblical than the more orthodox. If there was "pride of reason" anywhere it was with those who fashioned elaborate creeds that had no Bible warrant. It was because the Bible had no "clear word of prophecy" about the nature of Christ and the Atonement that the liberals were vague and hesitating as to these matters; and Channing was so to a remarkable degree his whole life long.

It is probable that through his personal sympathies with Buckminster, and more especially with Thacher, whom he loved so much, Channing's attraction to the liberal party was much enhanced,

but one has only to follow the course of his thought from 1803 to 1815 to see that such events as those of the later year were bound to conquer his distaste for controversy and carry him, full armed, into the fight which he had vainly hoped to make impossible.

In 1806 he seems to speak as consciously conservative in opinion, yet from the standpoint of religious liberty: "I cannot charge a man with damnable heresy unless I see that his sentiments prove an opposite temper, or, at least, exclude the exercise of Christian love." A little later his grandfather complains that Channing's standard is "not *particular* enough." "But this," the grandson answers, "is the distinguishing feature of our system of liberality. The greater the variety of sentiments with which a system will harmonize, or the fewer its fundamentals, the more worthy it is of liberal minds." Here, then, we have the conservative thought and the liberal disposition side by side. In 1807, in another letter to his grandfather, a devout Hopkinsian, he is clearly justifying his tolerance for others, while himself consciously orthodox. "Taught by experience to know my own blindness, shall I speak as if I could not err, and as if [others] might not, in some disputed points, be more enlightened than myself?" In 1811 he writes of a doughty assailant of Hopkins's and other departures from Old Calvinism, "I can only lament that such powers are not employed in recommending a purer and simpler

form of Christianity. . . . I cannot suffer even a superior to strip my religion of its reasonableness, beauty, and simplicity." Here were the marks of his high calling plain enough. A year later we have views of the Lord's Supper in sharp contrast with the Edwardsian standard, "Saints only need apply." He looked into his own heart and wrote, Dec. 29, 1812, in such a way as to show that the Calvinistic spell upon his mind had wholly lost its power: —

> I know that Calvinism is embraced by many excellent people, but I know that on some minds it has the most mournful effects, that it spreads over them an impenetrable gloom, that it generates a spirit of bondage and fear, that it chills the best affections, that it represses virtuous effort, that it sometimes shakes the throne of reason . . .

The passage breaks off sharply in the middle of a sentence, and what follows is not addressed to his correspondent: —

> O my merciful Father! I cannot speak of thee in the language which this system would suggest. No! Thou hast been too kind to deserve this reproach from my lips. Thou hast created me to be happy; thou callest me to virtue and piety, because in these consists my felicity; and thou wilt demand nothing from me but what thou givest me ability to perform.

Farther along in the same letter he objects to "that unscriptural phrase, 'the merits of Christ,'" and writes of the Son's equality with the Father as

"the darkest of all doctrines."[1] He urges his friend to read Noah Worcester's "Bible News of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," and in 1813 we find him writing to the peaceful author of that bomb-like book, urging him to accept the editorship of the "Christian Disciple," a new magazine, in place of Andrews Norton's "General Repository" (1812, 1813), which had succeeded the less theological and polemic "Anthology." The "Panoplist's" demand for "the immediate erection of ecclesiastical tribunals" required a counteracting influence. Channing would not have Worcester devote the new magazine to any particular view of "the person and dignity of Christ."

> We have no desire to diffuse any religious peculiarities. Our great desire is to preserve our fellow Christians from the systematic and unwearied efforts which are making to impose on them a *human creed* and to infuse into them angry and bitter feelings towards those who differ from them.

A comparison of the "Christian Disciple" with the "Panoplist" is certainly very favorable to the liberals as less controversial than the orthodox. In ten years their new organ contained but six controversial articles, and the "Christian Examiner" (1824–1869) had as clean a record, while the "Panoplist" and "Spirit of the Pilgrims" re-

[1] He had Waterland, that great Trinitarian coryphæus, to back him here with his declaration, "You can never fix any certain principle of individuation," *i. e.*, between the Father and Son, and the ideas of Being and Person.

sounded with the din of controversial zeal as their most characteristic note.

Already in 1811 Channing was stating the importance of free inquiry so clearly and forcibly that there was little room for further gain in this particular. He wrote and underscored, "*The only way of producing uniformity is to encourage serious and earnest inquiry.*" It was upon a spirit tempered to this fineness, a man singularly sensitive to any imputation cast upon his personal honor, and dreading the spirit of exclusion in religion as he dreaded nothing else, that the events of 1815 came with an earthquake force, shaking his island of reserve from that propriety which hitherto it had observed.

Early in the year 1815 Dr. Jedidiah Morse, on whose tracks we have come several times already,[1]

[1] See his *Life* by Dr. W. B. Sprague, compiler of the invaluable *Annals of the American Pulpit.* The book contains a portrait which might be a composite photograph of all the sourer saints in the Puritan calendar. Yet he not only suffered the little children to come unto him but welcomed them; Lucy Osgood, daughter of Dr. Osgood, of Medford, and, like him, of blessed memory, tells how pleasantly, though he warned her that Worcester's *Bible News* was a short road to "the everlasting bonfire." Strangely enough one of his kindest actions was the rescue from debt of the father of Thomas Whittemore, that hard-hitting Universalist. He was born in Woodstock, Conn., in 1761, licensed to preach in 1785, settled in Charlestown, Mass., in 1789, on a salary of $11 per week, house and firewood. One dollar a week he relinquished because his people had not yet recovered from the burning of their homes by the British soldiers in 1775, after the battle of Bunker Hill. Old experience attained to nothing of prophetic strain in Dr. Belknap's installation sermon from the text, "Neither as lording it over God's heritage, but as ensamples

always keen upon the scent of heresy, ran to cover game of unprecedented size and danger to the fold. This game was Belsham's life of Theophilus Lindsey, the saintly Unitarian founder to whom Belsham had succeeded in the ministry of the first English Unitarian church which frankly took the Unitarian name. Belsham was a lesser light than Lindsey, Priestley, or Price, the three Unitarian leaders, in conjunction with whose names we often find his own. Belsham was a vigorous and manly follower on Priestley's materialistic line. His life of Lindsey contained a chapter on American Unitarianism which was animated by a desire, if not a determination, to make the Americans speak out more boldly and make a party by themselves after the

to the flock." No man of his time so lorded it over God's heritage as Dr. Morse. He was the head and front of orthodox opposition to the liberal offending. At every stage of that opposition he was, if not easily first, always well in the lead. The institution of the General Association, the attempted Consociation, the arming of the *Panoplist*, the criticism of Ware's Harvard appointment, the Andover counterblast to this, the building and manning of the Park Street Church, — in all these pithy and momentous enterprises his was an active and aggressive part. His central purpose was to unite the Old Calvinists and Hopkinsians in opposition to the liberals. But Unitarianism and Universalism grew rank in the shadow of his preaching, and his own people tired of him and turned him out. Not the least of his distinctions was to be the father of S. F. B. Morse, the inventor of the electric telegraph and the founder of the New York Academy of Design, whom I knew as one of O. B. Frothingham's devoted adherents. It is graved upon Jedidiah's monument that he was "The Father of American Geography," but his most characteristic paternity was that of the separation of the New England Congregational churches into two rival sects.

English fashion. Dr. Morse made haste to believe that the book had been practically suppressed on account of this chapter. It is certain that few copies of it were circulated in Boston and Cambridge. This really meant that few had any liking for Belsham's Socinian dogmatism. Dr. Morse's construction was different and not wholly wrong. It was that the Boston liberals were afraid to have the truth come out. They were, because it was such partial and misleading truth. The facts were generally as stated, but inferences would be drawn from them that would be cruel and unjust. The event more than justified their grave anticipations and their fears.

Dr. Morse was so much impressed by Lord Chesterfield's "Letters" that he Bowdlerized them for Boston use, "Chesterfield on Politeness, improved by Dr. Morse." He now set out to improve on Belsham's chapter on American Unitarianism. He printed it separately[1] in a pamphlet, "without note or alteration," as deposed, but with ten pages of preface to thirty-eight of borrowed matter, abounding in adroit insinuations and reproducing

[1] *American Unitarianism, or a Brief History of the Progress and Present State of the Unitarian Churches in America.* Compiled from Documents and Information Communicated by the Rev. James Freeman, D. D., and William Wells, Jr., Esq., of Boston, and from other Unitarian gentlemen in this country. By the Rev. Thomas Belsham, Essex Street, London. Extracted from the *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Theophilus Lindsey*, published in London, in 1812, and now published for the benefit of the Christian Churches in this country, without note or alteration. The date is interesting: for three years the laws which Mr. Belsham had laid down for the Americans had been silent in the midst of arms.

from other sources Belsham's elaborate personal creed. I look at the brown old pamphlet[1] and wonder that so great a matter could be kindled by so little fire. But it was the improvement that was most combustible. This was a review of the pamphlet in the "Panoplist" by Jeremiah Evarts, father of Senator Evarts, whom Dr. Morse had brought to Boston in 1810 to edit the "Panoplist." The review was ably written and admirably calculated to do the mischief it was contrived to bring about. It had a threefold purpose: first, to identify American liberals with English Unitarians; second, to convict the former of dishonesty in covertly teaching or hypocritically concealing their Unitarian opinions; third, to demand the denial to all Unitarians of the Christian name and their exclusion from all Christian courtesy and fellowship.

It was this review, with its damaging reflections and insinuations and its exclusive spirit, that brought the Unitarian Controversy to its acutest stage and roused William Ellery Channing, now thirty-five years old, to the assumption of duties to which he had no natural inclination. Yet, for a man averse to controversy, it must be conceded that he had for it an aptitude and skill second to

[1] My private copy, as of other pamphlets principal to the controversy, was first owned by the Hon. Ezra Starkweather, of Worthington, Mass. If he was not one of the liberals, he was a man who read both sides. Then, however, almost every hill town had its group of deep-reading and deep-thinking men; Chesterfield, my own summer town, a very notable one, with Luther Edwards for preëminence, elbow on knee and chin on hand, when he would utter oracles.

none of those who were eventually drawn in towards the storm centre and there behaved themselves, some well, and others not so well. The form of Channing's original contribution was that of a letter to his friend Thacher, with whom he had talked the matter over carefully. It was probably upon Thacher's urgency that Channing accepted the unwelcome task. Could he have prevailed on Thacher to accept it, the whips to which the orthodox objected as swung by Channing would have been scorpions in the hands of his less cautious friend. The letter as written was not, perhaps, a model of sweetness or amenity, but then the provocation was immense. And what it set out to do, it did most royally. There was a deep personal note in Channing's repudiation of the attempt to identify Boston liberalism with English Unitarianism. Martineau, in his noble article on Channing ("Essays, Reviews, and Addresses," i. 81), contends that Channing was closer kin to Hopkins and Edwards than to Belsham and Priestley. There was little to choose on the point of moral freedom, but the materialism of Belsham and Priestley was to Channing an intolerable offence. There were various particulars in which his thoughts were not their thoughts, nor his ways their ways. For one thing Belsham, as shown by his own words in the Morse pamphlet, was frankly Universalist, and Channing had not yet come into so large a place. But few of the liberals had done so, and many more of them were Arians, with Channing, in their doctrine of

Christ's nature, rather than Socinians, with Priestley, Belsham, and Lindsey. It is difficult to imagine how it could seem right to Morse and Evarts to affix the English stigma generally to their Unitarian brethren. In England *only* the Socinian Unitarians were *called* Unitarians; those of the Arian type were called simply Arians. Here was a good reason for American hesitation as to accepting the proffered brand. The liberals accounted themselves Christians and Congregationalists, and here were names enough. While differing from Belsham in almost every particular of his creed, Channing did not wish to be considered as casting the least reproach on him or others who, in England or America, believed in the simple humanity of Christ. "Whilst I differ from them in opinion, I have no disposition to deny to them the name and privileges of Christians." In this part of Channing's letter there was a too nervous anxiety lest his views should be confounded with those of Belsham, and an exaggerated estimate of their difference. But Channing had not yet come to the full breadth of his religious sympathy, and one is apt to dent his controversial sword in the very act of grinding it.

The second part was of much more importance. This was in rebuttal of the charge of base, cowardly, and hypocritical concealment of their opinions by liberal Christians. The concealment he did not deny, but rather conceded to a degree not justified perfectly by the facts at our command.

But, in following this course, we are not conscious of having contracted, in the least degree, the guilt of insincerity. We have aimed at making no false impression. We have only followed a general system, which we are persuaded to be best for our people and for the cause of Christianity, — the system of excluding controversy as much as possible from our pulpits.

The doctrine of the Trinity he had never assailed in the pulpit, nor the doctrines of total depravity and election, "the most injurious errors which ever darkened the Christian world," the exposing of which would delight any congregation, a fact showing how little fear had to do with the reticence. He and his friends could, had they wished, have made the word Calvinist a byword and a hissing, but they had never uttered the name in the pulpit. As "the most unintelligible doctrine about which Christians had ever disputed," the doctrine of the Trinity had not seemed a fit one for popular discussion. It was much the same with the nature of Christ. The best men were divided on this point; whence modesty with regard to it was becoming, and scanty speech.

No aspect of the Unitarian Controversy has been more dwelt upon than this of the "silent brotherhood." Was the concealment, as Morse and Evarts charged, base, cowardly, and hypocritical, or was it, as Channing insisted, noble, generous, self-denying? It was the latter for the most part, but not altogether.[1] Caution and prudence had their place

[1] See W. C. Gannett's *Ezra Stiles Gannett*, pp. 50, 51, at which Dr. Dewey (private letter) demurred, as conceding too much to the charge of prudential motives.

and influence here and there. That Channing's motives were precisely what he represented them as being, there cannot be a moment's doubt, and in this respect he spoke in order that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed. It was of the very essence of the liberal movement to emphasize the ethical and spiritual, and treat theological dogmas as negligible quantities. It was its peculiar joy to preach a positive religion, and especially to exhibit "the simplicity of the gospel" in preference to its obscurer traits. Moreover, the peace and unity of the Congregational body were very dear to liberals. There will be less and less question of their high sincerity in proportion as the facts are understood, while there may be persistent difference as to the wisdom of their course. That a bolder method would have been fatal to their cause seems not so sure as Morse and Evarts thought. But for the orthodox reaction, the whole body of New England churches would have become liberal before Channing's death. Yet might not a bolder method have arrived more speedily at the same result?

It was when Channing came to the third part of his letter, — his depreciation of the exclusive policy, — that he put forth all his strength. "For myself," he said, "the universe would not tempt me to bear a part in this work of dividing Christ's church and of denouncing his followers. If there be an act which, above all others, is a transgression of Christian law, it is this." Seldom at any time

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have the vaticinations of prophetic souls been realized more obviously or more painfully than were Channing's when he raised the veil on the long train of irritations, hatreds, recriminations that would ensue upon the adoption of the exclusive policy. Fearing nothing for himself, he feared countless miseries for the church of Christ, and not least for "the very Christians who denounce us, who seem indeed to be united, now that a common enemy is to be trodden under foot, but who have sufficient diversities of opinion among themselves to awaken against each other all the fury of intolerance when this shall have become the temper and habit of their minds." All the passion of which Channing's nature was capable went out in the strong crying of this noble plea for a ministry of reconciliation.

I sometimes wonder that his plea did not prevail. But Dr. Morse did not. He was not reckoning without his host of strong allies. One of these was Dr. Samuel Worcester, brother of that Noah Worcester of the "Bible News" and "Christian Disciple," whose feet were shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Already the divisive sword had cleft one family asunder. Samuel Worcester had suffered for his orthodox belief — the loss of his Fitchburg pulpit; now was his day and hour. But there was genuine surprise for Channing in his sharp attack. He did not expect this noble Brutus to be striking with the rest. And he struck hard, three times. To his first and second

letters Channing replied promptly, reserving preterition for the third, which ran out into a technical discussion of the Trinity, for which Channing had imperfect training and no taste. There were joints in his armor which his opponent found and pierced, yet reached no vital part. Channing kept steadily in view the great headlands of the controversy; fidelity to Scripture and the fallibility of human creeds; avoidance of theological preaching with a view to spiritual edification; the lack of cowardly concealment here; the melancholy promise of a divided fold. Several of his allusions to the Socinians as "the lowest Unitarians" could not have been much relished by Dr. Freeman and those like-minded. But Channing's last letter was braver than his first in its demand for open fellowship with these. He praised their Christian spirit and their Christian life: —

> Such men we have not dared to exclude from the Christian Church, on the ground of what seems to us great errors, any more than to exclude the disciples of Calvin, whose errors we also deeply lament, but whose errors are often concealed from us by the brightness of their Christian virtues.

Touching the Trinity, he went nigh to the discovery of a late orthodox scholar[1] that, for all their differences as to whether "the blessed three" were three *substances*, or three *somewhats* (Stuart's word), or three *persons*, so called for want of a

[1] Professor Levi Leonard Paine, *Evolution of Trinitarian Doctrine.*

better name, no one of them was strictly orthodox according to the orthodoxy of the Nicene creed.

And ought [he asked] phrases like these — of which we find not a trace in the Bible, which cannot be defined by those who employ them, which convey to common minds no more meaning than the words of an unknown tongue, and which present to the learned only flitting shadows of thought instead of clear and steady conceptions, — to separate those who are united in the great principles which I have stated? [1]

What follows reads very much as if it were an extract from William Channing Gannett's recent sermon on "Reconciliation in Religion," and is far more apt to present conditions than to those of seventy-five years since.

Trinitarians, indeed, are apt to suppose themselves at an immeasurable distance from Unitarians. The reason, I think, is that they are surrounded with a mist of obscure phraseology. Were this mist dispersed, I believe that they would be surprised at discovering their proximity to the Unitarians, and would learn that they had been wasting their hostility on a band of friends and brothers.

So, too, on the other hand, if the Unitarians could pierce the mist and know what the orthodox are trying to enunciate, they might sometimes say, "We also believe that." And there is the barest possibility, of course, that sometimes the Unitarians are a little mystified themselves.

[1] "God's infinite perfection," "salvation through Jesus Christ," "the same great principles of duty" which he taught, and "the same exalted view of human perfection."

If Channing withdrew from the initiatory contest, leaving with his opponent that confidence of victory which generally pertains to the last word, it was only that he might continue the work he had begun on longer lines and in a more effective way. He never made himself cheap; he knew how to reserve his fire; large solid shot were much more to his mind than smaller, scattering stuff. These fighting metaphors seem strangely out of keeping with his peaceful disposition, but, as one of our own poets has written, —

> When once their slumbering passions burn,
> The peaceful are the strong.

The passions that rather glowed than flamed in the few great things which Channing contributed to the controversy were for the unbroken fellowship, and, that soon declaring itself impossible, for the clearest possible enunciation of the principles and doctrines of the liberal movement. We have the principles in an article considering "The System of Exclusion and Denunciation in Religion" (1815). It is much less elaborate than the more classical treatment of the same subject a few years later by James Walker, but, because simpler, not, I think, less effective. The contention was that the honor of religion would never suffer by admitting to Christian fellowship men of irreproachable character. What good had the exclusive spirit done? "Could the thunders and lightnings of excommunication have corrected the atmosphere of the church, not one pestilential vapor would

have loaded it for ages. The air of Paradise would not have been more pure." . . . "Bearing testimony to the truth" by branding men as heretics and denouncing on them the pains of hell, with a view to preventing candid inquiry, was a very doubtful business. "Persecution has given up its halter and fagot, but it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy." There is a reminiscence of Shakespeare, but no quotation, when he says, "Now for myself, I am as willing that my adversary should take my purse or my life as that he should rob me of my reputation, of the affection of my friends, and of my means of doing good." Nothing is more characteristic of Channing's controversial tone than its lofty self-respect, its proud resentment of all imputations cast on his own character or that of his friends. They were insulted, he declared, by the concession of their honesty. The exclusive system was wholly subversive of free inquiry into the Scriptures. What is the use of sending men to the Scriptures and telling them that unless they find in them what they do not contain they will be cut off from the church on earth and that above? This system was hostile to "the great principles of Congregationalism." Resort was to be had to "ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS" (Channing seldom resorted to such typographical devices to deepen his impression), "the most degrading form of vassalage, palsying the mind and imposing on it the dreams and fictions of men

for the everlasting truth of God." In conclusion there was a more elaborate prophecy than in the last letter to Worcester of the miserable divisions that would ensue on the success of the exclusive system. Beginning with the convention of Congregational ministers of Massachusetts, he ran the line of cleavage down through all the smaller aggregations until it reached the family and there separated wives and husbands, parents and children, by an impassable gulf.

In 1819 and 1820 two articles in the "Christian Disciple," "Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered" and "The Moral Argument against Calvinism," were significant and weighty contributions to the progress of events. They marked the fading hope of any ministry of reconciliation that would heal the widening breach. It may not be amiss to quote from the "Moral Argument" Channing's description of Calvinism, seeing that in our own time it has fallen into such disrespect and desuetude that its features are well-nigh forgotten. Even then there were attempts to soften them and coax a smile onto the hard-set lips, but it is certain that Channing did not exaggerate "the most authentic records of the doctrine" or its popular appreciation.

> Calvinism teaches that, in consequence of Adam's sin in eating the forbidden fruit, God brings into life all his posterity with a nature wholly corrupt, so that they are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all

evil, and that continually. It teaches that all mankind, having fallen in Adam, are under God's wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. It teaches that, from this ruined race, God, out of his mere good pleasure, has elected a certain number to be saved by Christ, not induced to this choice by any foresight of their faith or good works, but wholly by his free grace and love; and that, having thus predestinated them to eternal life, he renews and sanctifies them by his almighty and special agency, and brings them into a state of grace, from which they cannot fall and perish. It teaches that the rest of mankind he is pleased to pass over, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sins, to the honor of his justice and power; in other words, he leaves the rest to the corruption in which they were born, withholds the grace which is necessary to their recovery, and condemns them to "most grievous torments in soul and body without intermission in hell-fire forever."

"How can it be possible," he asked, "that men can hold these doctrines and yet maintain God's goodness and equity?" Here he was met by the rejoinder that we cannot understand the mysteries of God. To this there was an elaborate reply, a justification of man's use, in judging God, of the moral reason God had given him. What good, he asked, in the divine perfections, if they are consistent with the Calvinistic representation? To the question, Calvinism rejected, what becomes of Christianity, he answered, "Christianity contains no such doctrines. Christianity was designed to manifest God in a character of perfect benevolence."

Now is it probable that a religion, having this object, gives views of the Supreme Being . . . which if made our pattern would convert us into monsters? It is plain that were a human parent to form himself on the universal Father, as described by Calvinism, that is, were he to bring his children into life totally depraved, and then to pursue them with endless punishment, we should charge him with a cruelty not surpassed in the annals of the world; or were a sovereign to incapacitate his subjects in any way whatever for obeying his laws, and then to torture them in dungeons of perpetual woe, we should say that history records no darker crime.

In the "Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered," there was the unconscious tendency to make the Unitarian statement of "the divinity of Jesus Christ" as strong as possible consistently with the denial of his identity with God.

We believe that Jesus Christ was the most glorious display, expression, and representative of God to mankind, so that in seeing him we see and know the invisible Father; so that, when Christ came, *God visited the world* and dwelt among men more conspicuously than at any other period.

To the Calvinistic doctrine that sin, as against an infinite being, is infinite sin, and requires infinite atonement, he said, "Not even a whisper of this doctrine comes to us from the Scriptures," and he denied the metaphysics of it altogether. Where, then, our hope? "In the boundless and almighty goodness of our Father; in God's unchangeable mercy, not Christ's infinity." Next he came to the more terrible charge that Unitarians

were "preaching morality." If by morality was meant merely the outward decencies of life, the charge was false. If it meant inward purity, heavenly-mindedness, love of Jesus Christ and God, then it was true, and grandly so, "all the doctrines, precepts, threatenings, and promises of the Gospel having been revealed for no other end than to make men moral in this true and generous sense."

The next charge he attended to was a lack of zeal, and here spoke the Channing whose inheritance on one line had been from Mayhew's strenuous opposition to the Whitefield revival, the Channing for whom the words enthusiasm and fanaticism meant much the same.

> We dread a showy religion. We are disgusted with pretensions to superior sanctity, that stale and vulgar way of building up a sect. . . . We think it no part of piety to publish its fervors, but prefer a delicacy in regard to these secrets of the soul; and hence, to those persons who think religion ought to be worn conspicuously and spoken of passionately, we may seem cold and dead, when, perhaps, were the heart uncovered, it might be seen to be "alive to God" as truly as their own.[1]

[1] The article concluded with a rebuttal of the charge that Unitarianism was "a half-way house to infidelity." He cited Locke and Newton and Clarke and Lardner as eminent defenders of Christianity against "infidels," *i. e.*, the deists and freethinkers of their time, whose ideas are now well domesticated not only in the Unitarian households but in the orthodox. Worcester had challenged his claim to Dr. Clarke, but no one would dispute it now. Coming to Priestley, Channing at first balked a little and then took a good, wide leap: "Whatever we may think of

But all that was stated in these articles and in the controversial letters, scantily and imperfectly, was embraced more fully and more carefully in the famous "Baltimore Sermon," preached at the ordination of the Rev. Jared Sparks in 1819. Mr. Sparks is better "named and known by that hour's feat" than by his subsequent historical writing and presidency of Harvard College. The sermon is agreed to have been the strongest ever preached by Channing on distinctly Unitarian lines, his most important contribution to the Unitarian Controversy, and to the definite integration of the Unitarian body. It is an interesting paradox that this devout anti-sectarian, who could, with Lessing, "hate Truth itself if it should make a sect," was more instrumental than any other in the inspiration of that courage which finally braced itself to answer the exclusionists, "If you *will* have it so, so be it." The Baltimore society had been organized on distinctly Unitarian lines, and it had built unto itself a church, than which there was not at that time a more beautiful and imposing one in the United States. Lately it has been improved in its acoustic properties and much enriched in decorative effect. I have stood (reverently, I trust) in the pulpit from which Channing preached. It is not unlike a mortar in its shape, and it is, hence, suggestive of the projectile which went soaring out

some of his opinions, we believe that none of his opposers ever questioned the importance of his vindications of our common faith."

of it that May morning to scatter consternation far and wide. Channing did not stint his space that day; the sermon[1] contains some 14,000 words, and as delivered by Channing must have consumed nearly or quite two hours. It is too easily accessible to require any extended description or summary. The plan was very simple: first to set forth the principles adopted by Unitarians in interpreting the Scriptures, and then some of the doctrines which the Scriptures, properly interpreted, seemed clearly to express. The main principle of scriptural interpretation was a strong one from the general view-point of the time, to which the Bible was one book, from Genesis to Revelation a consistent whole, which, whenever not appearing to agree with itself, must be made to do so. How? Simply, said Channing, by interpreting the obscurer by the clearer and more dominant parts. It is easy to observe that this method has not an inch of standing-room in our later critical thought. But in 1819 the unity of

[1] The original MS. is my very own, having been given to me by Dr. Channing's granddaughter, Grace Ellery Channing-Stetson, Nov. 27, 1901. It differs from the printed form somewhat. There could not be a greater contrast than between the smooth and limpid flow of the printed page and the brokenness and mending of the manuscript, the writing unconscionably bad, the erasures and interlineations numberless. It is hard to conceive how Channing could preach with that even stream which was habitual with him from such a manuscript. I think his handwriting worse than Theodore Parker's, because, while Parker finished every word after a fashion, Channing, generally beginning well, often ran out into a formlessness that was dreadfully obscure.

the Bible was common ground to orthodox and liberal, and Channing's method was that of the most obvious wisdom and the plainest common sense. Incidentally there was a noble defence of reason against those who treated it with contempt.

Passing to the second part of his discourse, Channing dealt first with the unreasonableness of the Trinitarian dogma, its perplexity for the understanding, its confusion for the pious heart, and, second, with the unity of Christ's nature as opposed to the doctrine of his double nature. At this point the argument was very clear and strong. A few Scripture texts were cited in support of both God's unity and Christ's, but the argument was mainly an appeal to men's rational natures. It was always so with Channing, and especially in his maturer years. There was the stated reliance upon Scripture, but this was the least dust of the balance in comparison with the rational argument. His next point was the moral perfection of God, the oneness of his justice and his mercy, his parental character, his freedom from those traits which constituted him "a being whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to if we could." He struck hard at the distinction of *natural* and *moral inability*, declaring it to be a distinction without a difference, both equally dishonorable to God and man, absolving the latter from all guilt and laying it at the door of heaven. Coming to the Atonement, he confessed a difference among Unitarians as to "the precise influ-

ence of Christ's death on our forgiveness," adding that many were dissatisfied with the idea of its being a purely moral influence, — clearly his own feeling, this. But there was no wavering as to the rejection of the idea that Christ's suffering was a price to God to buy his mercy to mankind. In conclusion the preacher gave the Unitarian view of Christian virtue. He recurred to his distrust of spasmodic enthusiasm. The love of God and Christ were pictured in a deep, heart-moving way as virtue's top and crown. Nor did the sermon end without some drastic treatment of those who elevated their human creeds above the oracles of God, and made them standards of the character of those who were seeking with all diligence to conform their lives to the pattern which they had seen in the mount of Christ's transcendent holiness.

Strangely enough, in this sermon there was no special stress upon Channing's "one sublime idea," as he called it, the dignity of human nature, the greatness of the human soul. Weighed in the scales of an ethical and spiritual judgment, there are among his sermons some that outweigh this. Channing was never at his best when in his controversial vein. Nevertheless, the Baltimore sermon is fully equal to its fame. What it set out to do, it did right gloriously. Various editions straightway appeared, and its circulation was not exceeded by any American publication until in 1830 Webster made his memorable reply to Hayne. The echoes rolled through all the country

from the Alleghanies to the sea. We hear of men far down in Maine — which was a part of Massachusetts then — reading it and saying, "We must organize a Unitarian church," and doing it with joyful heart. We have heard Andrews Norton saying that to hear Buckminster was "like walking in the triumphal procession of Truth." Those who heard the Baltimore sermon must have had that feeling in full strength. Some of us have it when we read the sermon now, though it was written more than eighty years ago.

CHAPTER VI

THINGS NEW AND OLD

It is no part of my intended scheme to write a history of the Unitarian Controversy in its various expression during the fifteen to twenty years that corresponded with its liveliest ebullition. A much bigger book than this has been written on that subject and still left the most untold. I should have little space for Channing if I wrote of that with an ungrudging hand. And it is not as if his part in it was conspicuous, measured by the amount of his spoken or written contribution to the course of the debate. Rather it was conspicuously small. The items already mentioned go nigh to exhaust the list of his controversial sermons and articles. A more significant fact is that, with a few notable additions, they do completely exhaust the controversial product of his mind. Some half dozen sermons and articles after the letters of 1815, including those already named, are printed in his collected works, and William Henry Channing assures us that there was nothing more to print: a careful examination of his manuscripts brought nothing more to light of a distinctly controversial character. But this note must not be pressed too

far. Not to strike often, but to strike hard was Channing's policy. While he was musing the fire burned, and when he spoke again it was with the strength he had been slowly gathering, and had not wasted in a multitude of effortless effusions having too much in common with the average stock in controversial trade. And then, too, it should be remembered that much of his preaching that was not definitely controversial held a good deal of controversial matter in solution. No names were called, no doctrines specified, but there was the criticism of the rejected system by a larger view, as, when Michael Angelo would question Raphael's conception, he projected his own bolder thought upon the wall and quietly withdrew, leaving the less confronted by the greater thing.

If a detailed history of the controversy is impossible, a few of its more striking incidents are necessary to our apprehension of the general progress of events. One of these was John Lowell's pamphlet, "Are you a Christian or a Calvinist?" which came close upon the heels of the Channing-Worcester letters. It took an aggressive, where Channing's had been a defensive line. It was a sharp, but not an unprovoked attack. It was a rejoinder to the question which had been stealthily set going, "Are you of the Boston or of the Christian religion?" and it was as effective as Huxley's retort on Fitz-James Stephen's account of Positivism as "Romanism minus Christianity;" viz., that Stephen's doctrine was "Calvinism minus

Christianity." Lowell was a lawyer who preferred preaching to practice, taking for his pulpit a newspaper or a pamphlet, as the occasion led. He was a brother of the Rev. Charles Lowell, and uncle to the poet, and to that John Lowell, Jr., whose monument is the Lowell Institute. After the death of Fisher Ames he was the leading Boston publicist and political authority. For twenty years he was the most active spirit in the affairs of Harvard College, and his first business in his pamphlet was to vindicate the University from the aspersions of Jedidiah Morse. The history of intolerance was brought to bear upon the situation in an effective manner, and every departure from pure Congregationalism in the direction of association or consociation was challenged in such terms as left no one in doubt as to what the writer meant and where he stood. It seems to be a fair construction that the liberal party was much heartened by these trumpet tones. Channing's Baltimore sermon was a sign of this, and, blown through silver, had a more rich but not less penetrating note than Mr. Lowell's bronze. It brought on the two most significant sub-controversies of the time, two battles of the giants, — one especially, that of Professor Stuart, of Andover, with Mr.[1] Andrews Norton. The controversy carried on by Professors Woods and Ware (the "Wood'n Ware Controversy" of the irreverent)

[1] He preferred the coefficient "Mr." to "Rev." or "Prof.," and his preference was generally respected by his contemporaries, a peculiar distinction thus attaching to the simpler form.

was of less marked ability. It must be confessed that Professor Woods, the Andover founder, had a more disagreeable task to perform than his colleague, Professor Stuart. It was to defend the doctrines of total depravity, vicarious atonement (reconciliation of God to man), election, and reprobation. It was not denied that these were ugly "facts," but they were facts the Bible proved conclusively (to Dr. Woods), and from the Bible there was no appeal. As against Professor Ware ("the elder Ware," father of Henry Ware, Jr.) he had, perhaps, the best of the argument in his metaphysics of necessity, and he had easily the best of it in his appeal to St. Paul, as if he were the whole Bible, Jesus included. But Ware was much the stronger in his insistence that the necessarian doctrine, as by Woods conceived, made morality impossible.[1] Shifting from the old Calvinistic ground to the Hopkinsian, Woods argued for a "natural depravity," which partly anticipated our more recent recognition of the diversity of human nature and the infected grain of natural heredity. Ware's doctrine of human nature was too much the modest ascription of his own unspotted goodness to all sorts and conditions of men. His appeal from the authority of St. Paul was to certain clearer deliverances of Jesus and to men's rational knowledge of the divine character. The comment

[1] See, in Professor William James's *The Will to Believe*, the chapter on "Determinism." I know of nothing better in the range of the discussion of this inexhaustible dilemma.

of our later knowledge on this controversy is as mixed as if it were a supreme court decision. It is that Ware's exegesis was as faulty in its endeavor to make Paul square with Jesus as Woods's was in its endeavor to make Jesus square with Paul, but that Ware's procedure was the more humane. It is, further, that if Ware's view of human nature was too genial, Woods's "depravity" was not "total," and, moreover, was not the traditional dogma. It is, finally, that Ware's appeal from an intolerable God, whether Calvin's or St. Paul's, was defective only in being too timidly pronounced.

It must have been a great relief to Channing for Ware to take the burden of this controversy off his hands; yet it may be questioned whether the good cause would not have been more advantaged by his own defence of his position. It cannot, however, be questioned that Mr. Norton was much better qualified than Channing to cope with Stuart on the Trinitarian field. With a drier mind than Stuart, Norton was his superior in critical knowledge and acumen; and "the consensus of the competent," as at present organized, is extremely favorable to his results. The gravamen of his contention was that neither the Trinity of three persons in one God nor the double nature of Christ had New Testament warrant. Our latest criticism, that is not hopelessly unscientific, tends to this conclusion, taking the New Testament texts at their face value, while, if the critic seeks the fact

of which the text is a distorted shadow, Gilbert in America, Harnack in Germany, finds the actual Jesus a much more simply human being than the Jesus of the Arian, or even the Socinian, Unitarian. In the course of the discussion, Stuart's Trinity, for greater safety, took on a Sabellian form, his three "persons" becoming three "somewhats," a conception hardly more soundly orthodox than the Arian or Socinian heresy.[1] The scholarship of the controversy reached to its top and crown in Mr. Norton's tract. Yet, in the year of its appearance, Channing, a member of the Corporation, objected to Mr. Norton's being made Dexter Professor of Biblical Criticism in Harvard College, because of his Socinian or too boldly critical opinions. Was this after Norton had brought to him and to the cause those splendid gifts? It seems impossible, but in the freedom of his biblical criticism, Norton was then much in advance of Channing, and if Channing was anywhere intellectually timid or capable of prejudice, it was where Socinianism was involved, as we shall have further reason to observe.

[1] Mr. Norton's *Statement of Reasons for not Believing the Doctrines of the Trinitarians* was first published in the *Christian Disciple*, 1819, and the same year in pamphlet form. Not until 1833 did it take the form of the more familiar and elaborate book with the same title. The reason given for the republication in the preface was that the Trinitarian doctrine was breeding infidelity. That preface is as full of the stuff that went to the making of Mr. Norton's *Latest Form of Infidelity*, in 1839, replying to Emerson's *Divinity School Address* of the previous year, as an egg is full of meat.

Into a situation already overcharged with elements of danger and distress, was projected, in 1820, the famous "Dedham decision" of the supreme court. The Dedham parish had settled Alvan Lamson two years before, a good man who, for more than forty years, went in and out among his people as a faithful pastor and preacher, while yet so studious withal that Theodore Parker hailed him as one of three or four of the good scholars left. Channing was one of the ordaining council. Very soon the majority of the church members became dissatisfied with Mr. Lamson's Unitarian preaching, a majority of the parish being more than pleased with it. The decision of the supreme court left the majority in possession of the church name, records, and even the communion plate. The decision was that "when the majority of the members of a Congregational church shall separate from the majority of the parish, the members [of the church] who remain shall constitute the church in such parish and retain the rights and *property* belonging thereto." No other circumstance did so much as this to embitter the relations of the conservatives and liberals. Nor can we wonder at its operation. It seemed to reverse all the traditions of the New England churches, and, where these had so long subordinated the secular powers, to subject them to their use and sway. However technically just, the decision could not appear so to the suffering minorities. It is permitted us to believe that its asperity was tempered

in some cases by the kindness of those occupying the seats of the mighty, though oftener rigidly enforced. The bad blood of the martyrs became the seed of many "second" churches, until in Massachusetts more than a hundred schisms marked the extent of liberal declension from the ancient standards and the reactionary zeal. In the meantime, new Unitarian societies were organized in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and other towns.

The leaves that strewed the brooks of Vallombrosa were hardly thicker than the printed sermons, letters, pamphlets, articles in periodicals, that we find lying scattered or in heaps along the years from 1820 to 1830; and once or twice after the latter date there was an angry whirl. For us the most of them are quite as dead as are the fallen leaves, but some of them just tingled with vitality when they were put forth by faithful witnesses to the truth as apprehended in the new or older way. It is an interesting fact that as Channing had in 1815, and again in 1819, furnished occasion for the intensest controversial heat, so he did again in 1826, and yet again in 1830, and that, as the first gun was his, so the last rumbling echoes were the resonance of certain of the most characteristic expressions of his thought and spirit. I speak now of his Election Sermon of 1830, and of the preface to his first published volume, "Discourses, Reviews, and Miscellanies," on the one hand, and, on the other, of the retort which these evoked from Stuart,

of Andover, followed by Bernard Whitman's counterblast and "Cheever's Vituperations."

It was such aspects of the controversy as those furnished by Whitman and Cheever that sickened Channing's heart. When his own side showed savage teeth or failed in Christian charity, he mourned with deeper grief than when his opponents were at fault, because liberal Christianity was the immediate jewel of his soul; and by liberal Christianity *he* meant, not a Christianity which put a liberal interpretation on the creed, but a Christianity which is liberal, kindly, gentle, and considerate in its judgment of those differing from ourselves. But it is time we were considering some of the later aspects of the controversy which reflected the image of Channing's thought and personality in a special manner.

Though Channing once described himself (much further on) as "little of a Unitarian," — to what end we shall see hereafter, — he probably did as much as any one to stamp the new departure with its Unitarian name. Mr. Andrews Norton gives him the credit, or the blame, of being the first among the liberals to name himself and those in substantial agreement with him, Unitarians. With him and others there was, however, some wavering at first; a general preference for the term "liberal" or "liberal Christian," yet with hesitation, lest this might prove the assumption of a virtue where they had it not. But already, in the Baltimore sermon, Channing wears the Unitarian

name as frankly as great generals wear the decorations on their breasts.

In 1818 the Federal Street society built a chapel, or vestry, on Berry Street, in the rear, if I should not say "by the side," of its meeting-house; and that Channing might better economize its convenience[1] he instituted the Berry Street Conference, which flourishes unto this day, though the place of its early meetings knows them no more. The conference met for the first time in 1820, and Channing made the opening address. It must be regarded as one of his principal contributions to the treasury of controversial opinion, pure gold where much of baser metal was thrown in. The institution of the conference was another sign of the process of segregation that was now rapidly going on. It was to be "confined to those who harmonize generally in opinion," but not simply with a view to extending their peculiar views; rather as "having for its object the general diffusion of *practical* religion and of the *spirit of Christianity*." The question he proposed for the

[1] Which was meant to serve the uses of a Sunday-school, now first begun, the catechism of young people, a charity school, women's meetings for the study of the Bible with the minister — a beautiful feature of Dr. Channing's work to which Elizabeth Peabody has furnished copious illustration. Still another use of the vestry was for a parish library, one of many in the churches of that period, owing much, perhaps, to Channing's inspiration. This was, I think, very direct in Marblehead, where Parson Bartlett was much shaped by Channing's moulding hand, and where the admirable collection of books in the "Teachers' Library" was one of the happiest fortunes of my later boyhood and my early youth.

first discussion was, "*How far is* REASON *to be used in explaining* REVELATION?" Once more he insisted that the Scriptures reveal God's unity and fatherhood "with noontide brightness," and that this revelation agrees perfectly with the teachings of nature and the sure dictates of our rational and moral faculties.

> Passages of Scripture which, taken separately, might give different ideas of God's nature and government, are, in common candor to the sacred writers, to be construed in consistency with these fundamental truths. . . . Before such an interpretation, the doctrines of Trinity, of Infinite Satisfaction, of Election, of Irresistible Grace, and Sudden Conversion, fly as the shades of night before the sun. . . . Let an irrational Protestantism be exclusively propagated, so that the intelligent will be called to make their election between this and infidelity, and [Norton's contention also] the result can hardly be doubted. The progressive influence of Christianity depends mainly on the fact that it is a rational religion; by which I mean not that it is such a system as reason could discover without revelation, still less that it is a cold and lifeless scheme of philosophical doctrines, but that it is a religion which agrees with itself, with our moral nature, with our experience and observation, with the order of the universe, and the manifest attributes of God.

The time would come when the supremacy of Reason and the coördinate subordination of Revelation, already implicit in Channing's thought, would be clearly announced. Did he not believe that the liberal system was better fitted than the

orthodox to make good men and assure social progress, he would say, "Let us at once lay down the weapons of controversy." But while never inferring evil character from erroneous opinions in particular cases, he hastened to insist that "it is the *practical influence* of liberal views, the baneful tendency of orthodox views, that summons us to the zealous advocacy of rational and consistent Christianity."

The Dudleian[1] Lecture of 1821, though perhaps the best, as it is the most elaborate, expression of Channing's theory of a supernatural Christianity, does not fall within the limits of his controversial work, and for the next great incident of this we must skip five eventful years, and coming to 1826, address ourselves to the consideration of his most famous (the orthodox of that day said "most infamous") sermon after that preached in Baltimore. The event it signalized was the dedication of the Second Unitarian Church in New York, that in which Dr. Dewey at first preached his living word.[2] The subject was, "Unitarian Christianity most favorable to Piety." I have imagined that the best part of the sermon is the introduction, with its philosophical account of the reason why men's opinions do not determine their characters. In this kind of writing Channing was always at his best.

[1] Young Waldo Emerson's great admiration of it was for "the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects;" "the fruit of a sort of moral imagination."

[2] It stood at the corner of Prince and Mercer streets. The dedication sermon was preached December 7.

Nothing is more common than to see a doctrine believed without swaying the will. Its efficacy depends, not on the assent of the intellect, but on the place which it occupies in the thoughts, on the distinction and vividness with which it is conceived, on its association with our common ideas, on its frequency of recurrence, and on its command of the attention, without which it has no life. . . . A creed is one thing as written in a book, and another as it exists in the minds of its advocates. In the book all the doctrines appear in equally strong and legible lines. In the mind many are faintly traced and seldom recurred to, whilst others are inscribed as with sunbeams and are the chosen, constant lights of the soul.

Having disclaimed all intention of measuring individual character by opinion, the preacher went on to give nine separate reasons for the justice of his contention that Unitarian Christianity was most favorable to piety. They were (1) that it presents one Object of supreme homage, and does not distract the mind with three persons having distinct qualities and relations; (2) that it holds inviolate the spirituality of God, not giving him a material human frame; (3) that its object of devotion is as simple as it is sublime (this a favorite note); (4) that it asserts the absolute and unbounded perfection of God's character; (5) that it accords with nature, with the world around and within us; (6) that it introduces us to new and ever larger views of God; (7) that it assigns to Jesus his highest proper place — that of the greatest of the sons of God; (8) that it meets the

wants of sinful men; (9) — the climax is significant — that it is a rational religion. Under each of these heads the higher was contrasted with the lower view. Under the fifth head we have an example of his most incisive manner. He was often less vivid and more colorless.

> Nature is no Trinitarian. It gives not a hint, not a glimpse of a tri-personal author. Trinitarianism is a confined system, shut up in a few texts, a few written lines, where many of the wisest minds have failed to discover it. It is not inscribed on the heavens and earth, not borne on every wind, not resounding and re-echoing through the universe. The sun and stars say nothing of a God of three persons. They all speak of the One Father whom *we* adore. To *our* ears one and the same voice comes from God's word and works, a full and swelling strain, growing clearer, louder, more thrilling as we listen, and with one blessed influence lifting up our souls to the Almighty Father.

The most elaborate section was the eighth. This was for the most part a criticism of the "infinite substitute" doctrine of the atonement. In due course came the passage which represented this doctrine as saying, in effect, that "God had erected a gallows in the centre of the universe and had publicly executed upon it, in room of the offenders, an Infinite Being, the partaker of his own Supreme Divinity." The passage was introduced with a profuse apology. The preacher warned his hearers that he was going to say something dreadful. He anticipated the severest reprobation, and his antici-

pation was made good. Nothing else in the whole scope of his utterance gave so much offence. One cannot easily imagine why. The stone of stumbling and the rock of offence was that word "gallows," as if "the shame of the cross" were not that crucifixion was, as Channing said, "a punishment more ignominious and agonizing than the gallows, a punishment reserved for slaves and the vilest malefactors." He made large allowance for the possible idealization of the doctrine by "the love, the disinterestedness, the moral grandeur and beauty of the sufferer," whereby "the cross is made a source of peace, gratitude, love, and hope." This part was clean forgotten, and the outcry was immense. But I have found no proof that Channing ever regretted the plainness of his illustration.

The Election Sermon of 1830, which, together with his nearly simultaneous preface to his first volume of sermons and articles, was his last great affront to the New England orthodoxy, was one of the most eloquent of all his sermons and addresses. By spiritual freedom he intended the "moral energy of holy purpose put forth against the senses, against the passions, against the world, thus liberating the intellect, conscience, and will," to the end that they may act powerfully and efficiently. He did not fight as one who beat the air: "We are in the midst of influences which menace the intellect and heart; and to be free is to withstand and conquer these." Not content with his first meagre definition, he burst into a splendid series of expan-

sive characterizations, each beginning, "I call that mind free." We all know the nephew's "Symphony," that beautiful expression of the ideal conduct of life. The uncle's characterization of spiritual freedom is his Oratorio. Hardly can I deny myself the quotation of its every part. Never was Channing more autobiographical than here. The exigency of the grand enumeration gives us at once the mark of his high calling and that to which he actually attained. Where all is so profoundly characteristic, it is hard to say which part is most so, but the third paragraph is certainly as much so as any.

> I call that mind free, which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven, which, whilst consulting others, inquires still more of the oracle within itself and uses instructions from abroad, not to supersede but to exalt and quicken its own energies.

Throughout we have an individualism as stern and exigent as that of Emerson's "Self-Reliance." The method is to show that civil or political liberty is of little worth except as it springs from, expresses, and invigorates spiritual freedom. The influence exerted by religion is first exhibited, then that exerted by government. There are points made under the second head that are as sharp to-day as then, and as much needed to force us back

on our reserves of political idealism. Now, as then, —

> We need to learn that the forms of liberty are not its essence; that, whilst the letter of a free constitution is preserved, its spirit may be lost; that even its wisest provisions and most guarded powers may be made weapons of tyranny. In a country called free, a majority may become a faction and a proscribed minority may be insulted, robbed, oppressed. Under elective governments a dominant party may become as truly a usurper, and as treasonably conspire against the state as an individual who forces his way by arms to the throne.

If he had ever caught the infection of the notion that an ideal form of government is the one thing needful he was by this time completely cured: "Free institutions secure rights only when secured by, and when invigorating, that spiritual freedom, that moral power and elevation which is the supreme good of our nature." Three years before De Tocqueville, he put his finger on our ailing spot: "The power of opinion grows into a despotism which more than all things represses original and free thoughts, subverts individuality of character, reduces the community to a spiritless monotony, and chills the love of perfection."

And this despotic power of opinion was most in evidence in that conception of religion which converts the principle which should take man out of the grasp of custom and fashion and refer him to a higher tribunal, into the chief instrument of usurpation over the soul.

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.

And the worst of these evils were not by any means the tortures inflicted on men's shrinking flesh, the horrors of the dungeon and the faggot and the wheel. The worst things were the enslavement and starvation and destruction of the mind.

I look with a solemn joy on the heroic spirits who have met freely and fearlessly pain and death in the cause of truth and human rights. But there are other victims of intolerance on whom I look with unmixed sorrow. They are those, who, spell-bound by early prejudice, or by intimidations from the pulpit and the press, dare not think; who anxiously stifle every doubt or misgiving in regard to their opinions as if to doubt were a crime; who shrink from the seekers after truth as from infection; who deny all virtue which does not wear the livery of its own sect; who, surrendering to others their best powers, receive unresistingly a teaching which wars against reason and conscience; and who think it a merit to impose on such as live within their influence the grievous bondage which they bear themselves.

It was the application of these considerations to the state of religion in and about Boston that made Channing the object of a fresh attack, of which Stuart, of Andover, was the head and front. Making the application, Channing said: —

We say we have no Inquisition. But a sect skilfully organized, trained to utter one cry, combined to cover with reproach whoever may differ from themselves, to drown the free expression of opinion by denunciations of heresy, and to strike terror into the community by

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joint and perpetual menace, — such a sect is as perilous and palsying to the intellect as the Inquisition. It serves its ministers as effectually as the sword.

In a pamphlet of fifty-two pages, Professor Stuart went about to show that Channing's allegations were "not true." In reply to this came Bernard Whitman's succession of letters, which were to Channing's sermon very much what Mrs. Stowe's "Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin" was to her novel. Terrible was their array of modern instances. Vigorous counterblasts ensued, some following eagerly the lead of Parsons Cooke, who, in 1828, had published "Unitarianism an Exclusive System." It was not an exclusive system, but it had its exclusive moments. In some of the church divisions, where it had a giant's strength, it used it like a giant. In many individual cases a mere change of opinion left the old virus of illiberality and ecclesiasticism working as fatally as ever.

The effect of Channing's sermon was intensified by the almost simultaneous appearance of his "Discourses, Reviews, and Miscellanies." Nowhere has he given a clearer account of his controversial attitude and spirit than in the preface to that book, and I cannot do better than to bring my story of his controversial action to an end with his own rendering of its conditions and its aims.

It was my lot to enter on public life at a time when this part of the country was visited by what I esteem one of its sorest scourges; I mean by a revival of the

spirit of intolerance and persecution. I saw the commencement of those systematic efforts, which have since been developed, for fastening on the community a particular creed. Opinions, which I thought true and purifying, were not only assailed as errors but branded as crimes. Then began what seems to me one of the gross immoralities of our times, the practice of aspersing the characters of exemplary men, on the ground of differences of opinion as to the most mysterious articles of faith. Then began those assaults on freedom of thought and speech, which, had they succeeded, would have left us only the name of religious liberty. Then it grew perilous to search the Scriptures for ourselves, and to speak freely the convictions of our own minds. I saw that penalties, as serious in this country as fine and imprisonment, were, if possible, to be attached to the profession of liberal views of Christianity, the penalties of general hatred and scorn; and that a degrading uniformity of opinion was to be imposed by the severest persecution which the spirit of the age would allow. At such a period, I dared not be silent. To oppose what I deemed error was to me a secondary consideration. My first duty, as I believed, was to maintain practically and resolutely the rights of the human mind; to live and to suffer, if to suffer were necessary, for that intellectual and religious liberty which I prize incomparably more than any civil rights. I felt myself called, not merely to plead in general for freedom of thought and speech, but, what was more important and trying, to assert this freedom by action. I should have felt myself disloyal to truth and freedom had I confined myself to vague commonplaces about our rights, and forborne to bear my testimony expressly and specially to proscribed and persecuted opinions. The times required that a voice of strength and courage should be lifted up, and I rejoice

that I was among those by whom it was uttered and sent far and wide. The timid, sensitive, diffident, and doubting needed this voice; and, without it, would have been overborne by the clamor of intolerance. If in any respect I have rendered a service to humanity and religion which may deserve to be remembered when I am taken away, it is this. I believe that had not the spirit of religious tyranny been met, as it was, in this region, by unyielding opposition, it would have fastened an iron yoke on the necks of this people. The cause of religious freedom owes its strength to nothing so much as to the constancy and resolution of its friends in this quarter. Here its chief battle has been fought, and not fought in vain.

The controversial incidents of Channing's life were set in a large environment of personal, domestic, and social circumstance. Great joys and sorrows had qualified the main course of his experience with their tributary streams. In the summer of 1814 he had married his cousin Ruth Gibbs, his playmate when she was a little girl, already fascinating him when she was his schoolmate in Newport with dim portents of her perfect charm, the woman whom he summoned to remake the world in the light of Hutcheson's revelation under the Cambridge willows (but never sent the letter), to whom for a long time he never told his love, because she was so rich and he so poor, bringing his courage to the daring point only when her persistent refusal of all other lovers made plain to him that her regard for him was more than cousinly. Her mother, his father's

sister, had a beautiful home in Boston, spacious enough for two families, and thither, soon after his marriage, he went to live. Here was good fortune, for the influence of Mrs. Gibbs, no less than that of her daughter, made for him a domestic atmosphere that was surcharged with pleasantness. With lighter cares, his own mother's anxious heart had learned to go more quietly, but the sharp sallies of her wit had taken wider range. For Channing to lose these would have been sad, and he did not altogether, for almost every well day of his life for the next twenty years he made her a little visit, and thereby added something to her stock of cheer and to his own. Almost simultaneously with his marriage began the long summer vacations at "Oakland," the Gibbs country-seat in Portsmouth, near Newport, on the island of Rhode Island. Channing's oldest brother died in 1810, just after the birth of his son William Henry, whose life of noble service was not to be complete without his biography of the greatest of the Channing line. The year 1815 meant more for Channing as marked by the death of his sister Ann, who had married Washington Allston, than as marked by the outbreak of the Unitarian Controversy. In 1816, as a bird comes and goes, came his first child, but not as the bough, which trembles for a moment and then is still again, was his pained and disappointed heart. A second daughter was born in 1818, in whom he and many others were to take great satisfaction and delight. The next year

a son was born who died in infancy, and in 1820 (February 22) a second, William Francis, in the maturity of his powers inventor and sociologist, whose recent death (March 19, 1901) deprived me of what would have been an inestimable help, for he was indifferent to no aspect of his father's life, and he admired him to the bounds of adoration and beyond.

The years of interwoven domestic happiness and sorrow did not synchronize with any improvement of Channing's health, and the strain of religious controversy must have been injurious to it, subject as he was to nervous excitement, lassitude, and depression. Some betterment, apparently, after the extreme debility of his early ministry was subject in 1820 to a lamentable falling off, and in 1821 he made a considerable journey through New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York, in the hope of gaining strength. The journey brought him much exhilaration and delight, but little, if any, physical advantage. Remarkably sensitive to natural beauty, both by nature and by the grace of Wordsworth, his best loved poet, he drank deep draughts of mountain gloom and glory, and what he saw he told with a minuteness that anticipated the pre-Raphaelites in whom Ruskin took such vast delight. At Oakland again in September, he wrote of the journey as "a specimen of the life he had led for many years." "One day undoes the work of many weeks." He would seem to have gained a little, when some new de-

rangement would take from him his power of body and mind; "then I slowly work my way upwards to fall as low again." But he did not account the journey lost. As if thinking of Wordsworth's "Yarrow Unvisited," he wrote, "I should hardly dare to travel over the same ground again, lest the bright images which are treasured up in memory should be dimmed by a second sight."

In the spring of 1822, a year's absence was granted him, and he set out for Europe at the end of May. It looks as if he "took his pleasures sadly," as Froissart did *not* say the English do, though he has been quoted a thousand times to that effect. What he needed was the frank objectivity of varied scenes, and what he imagined himself after was indicated thus: —

> A great object in travelling is to discover by comparison what is primary and universal in our nature, to separate the adventitious, secondary, temporary, to learn the deep principles on which all permanent improvements are to rest, to behold and to love what is *human*, to shake off our prejudices in favor of the unessential modifications of our nature, and to recognize the essential through these modifications.

But in the event he builded better than he planned. Crossing the Atlantic, the beauty of the ocean contended for the mastery of his thoughts with its scientific phenomena. Shelley, the most meteorological of poets, could hardly have been more sensitive to the atmospheric conditions, while Professor Tyndall could not have brought to them

much more of scientific curiosity. The English and Swiss lakes and mountains stirred in him deep delight, but everything in Italy, where he spent the winter months, was seen as through a mist of tears, news having come to him in Rome that his older boy was dead. That Mrs. Channing was with him made his grief more sharp, for had she not left her children to take care of him? His mother was still living (she lived till 1834), and he wrote to her on his forty-third birthday from Florence, but not a word of the beautiful city or its glorious memories; on the contrary, a letter of filial devotion mingled with severe introspection and regret for the overabundance of his personal good fortune in material things. Emerson had not yet written, —

> Well I know no mountain can
> Measure with a perfect man;[1]

but Channing could anticipate the thought, and even such an imperfect man as Coleridge was more interesting to him than Skiddaw or Mont Blanc, while to meet Wordsworth was for him an experience as impressive as for Emerson his later meeting with Carlyle. Coleridge recognized in him "a philosopher in the double sense of the word:" "He has the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love." After Channing had written his articles on Napoleon, a report somehow sprang up that they

[1] Changed, much for the worse, by Emerson, in his later editions, to —

> Well I know no mountain can,
> Zion or Meru, measure with man.

"had their birthplace and received their shape in Coleridge's study." Channing could not remember that Napoleon was so much as named in their sole interview. Moreover, there was little in the substance of the articles that Channing had not conceived before he went abroad and openly expressed. Coleridge wrote Allston, who had introduced Channing to him, that he had seldom met a person so interesting in conversation. Channing was much amused, seeing that Coleridge had done all the talking, and his own part had been that of "a passive bucket." He had, however, asked a few questions which had broken the dam of Coleridge's pent-up enthusiasm for German philosophy and the reformation and reorganization of the English Church. He was not exactly "pumped into for two stricken hours." He was obliged to withstand an inundation, and he found it more exhilarating than Carlyle imagined the experience could possibly be to any mortal.[1]

The visit to Wordsworth proved very satisfactory. There was stuff in it for another "Lyrical Ballad." It seemed so to Channing, as he was jolted along with Wordsworth in a rude farmer's cart, the only vehicle of which Channing could avail himself for the two and a half miles from the inn at Grasmere to the poet's home. When he set out to return, "after an interview of great

[1] For his London preaching, which made a profound impression, see "Channing the Man" in Miss E. P. Channing's *Kindling Thoughts*.

pleasure and interest," Wordsworth suggested that they should walk together until Channing was tired. But Channing's strength gave out at the end of the first half mile, and he invited Wordsworth to share his seat in the cart, which straightway became a chariot of the sun.

> We talked so eagerly as often to interrupt one another, and as I descended into Grasmere near sunset, with the placid lake before me, and Wordsworth talking and reciting poetry with a poet's spirit by my side, I felt that the combination of circumstances was such as my highest hopes could never have anticipated.

What Wordsworth remembered best of the talk, after the lapse of twenty years, was that Channing's one great evidence of the divine origin of Christianity was "that it contained nothing which rendered it unadapted to a progressive state of society [*sic* Harnack's "What is Christianity?"], that it put no checks on the activity of the human mind, and did not compel it to tread always in a beaten path."

So far as Channing's health was concerned, the European tour was disappointing. He felt this so keenly that, after once preaching to his people on his return, he went straight to Newport and wrote a letter to the parish officers, calling their attention to his condition and requesting some action on their part that would meet the needs of the society. What he wished for was a colleague, and knowing this, or divining it, the society hastened to vote that one should be secured. Mr. Dewey, whose promise

was already that of a very great preacher, had been Channing's assistant during the broken year preceding his European journey and his substitute during the year's absence, but he had now gone to New Bedford. It was, however, in no half-hearted way that the society turned to young Ezra Stiles Gannett, then twenty-three years old, and just through with his theological studies. If Channing had the saintly temper, Gannett did not have it in a less degree. Channing, economizing his energy, that he might use it more effectively, could spare himself as Gannett never could or did. That he was a grandson of that Ezra Stiles whom the young Channing had revered must have been one attraction of the younger for the older man. Between them there was a difference of gifts, with the same spirit. Channing's temper was the less conservative, the more sympathetic with the bolder methods of reform, and inclined him more to say, "The field is the world." Gannett had more confidence than Channing in denominational forms and instruments. He had one gift to a degree that Channing did not approximate, — that of extemporaneous preaching. The judgment of Wendell Phillips on this head should be worth something, and he once told me that he had never known Dr. Gannett's equal in such preaching, while his casual utterance was yet more remarkable. He described to me a meeting — of some Bible Society, I think — which was intolerably dull and cold till Dr. Gannett got the floor, "when," said Phillips, "he poured a flood

of lava over that sea of ice." Dr. Gannett's biography has been better written than that of any other Unitarian preacher, and for a good account[1] of his relations with Channing my readers must go back to that. The young colleague's position was a very trying one. The word in his heart might be like a fire shut up in his bones, but on Sunday morning he must go to church, not knowing whether he would be permitted to deliver his soul, or, Channing being well enough to preach, find that he must repress his noble rage. I have sometimes wondered if, in these relations, Dr. Channing did not suffer from his consciousness of preëminent standing, and show a lack of intelligent sympathy to which Dr. Gannett would have been superior in a like situation.

Mr. Gannett was ordained June 30, 1824. Ministers of every sect, "other than those of the Methodists" (!) were invited. Dr. Channing preached the sermon of which Henry Ware, Jr., wrote, "I have never seen the enthusiasm equalled. To hear such a sermon is one of the memorable things in a man's life, . . . an epoch in his existence." The subject was "The Demands of the Age on the Ministry." They were for the correction of scepticism and false views of religion, and, preëminently, for its alliance with the spirit of

[1] But apparently there was not much to tell, and we are obliged to infer that the personal relation, if much was expected, was a disappointing one. With the older man so reserved, the younger so eager and so sensitive, this was bound to happen.

practical reform. Consciously or unconsciously the preacher was here sounding a note prelusive of the character of his own ministry henceforth to a progressively pronounced degree.[1]

Meantime the aggregation of the Unitarian churches into a distinct denomination was being every year more perfectly assured, and had its signs of various importance, some of them spoken against not only by the orthodox critics but also by the

[1] The sermon as originally printed in pamphlet form had a note upon Dr. Priestley which gave great offence to Priestley's English friends. Mr. Belsham replied to it sharply and effectively in the *Monthly Repository*, xix. (1824), 678–681. At one point he was amusing, — where, speaking of Channing's view of the doctrine of necessity as having a chilling influence, he cited Jonathan Edwards to the contrary and said, "If any persons think that Mr. Edwards was a chilling writer, let them read what he has written on the eternity of hell-torments." In 1838 Harriet Martineau followed up Belsham's criticism of Channing in the chapter on Priestley in her *Retrospect of Western Travel*, i. 109–123. Few criticisms upon Channing were so well deserved as this. It is certain that he did not appreciate Priestley's character and that he had not qualified himself to speak of him as he did by carefully attending to his thought and life. Whatever he might think of Priestley's necessarian ethics and materialistic philosophy, for him to write of him as "constitutionally deficient in moral enthusiasm and deep feeling" was not to hit even the target, much less the bull's-eye. In 1831 Lucy Aikin wrote him an illuminating letter on this subject, in reply to which he said that he had "no prejudices or dislikes to overcome," and went on to give a different impression: "I know little of his works, and probably shall not read them, for I have little sympathy with his ethical and metaphysical doctrines, and seldom turn my thoughts to the religious controversies on which he spent so much of his zeal." Here we have less of Channing's habitually open mind than anywhere else. Those who like to batten on the faultiness of the great and good should make the most of it. See the *Channing-Aikin Correspondence*, pp. 93, 110.

most liberal. The fear and dread of making one more sect were strong in many liberal minds; in Channing's very strong, indeed, and yet he lent himself more cordially than some others to the new organization and the Unitarian name. The first number of the "Christian Register" was published April 20, 1821, the second not until August 24, but since then there has been no break in the line of its weekly publication. Its first editor and publisher was Mr. David Reed, who brought to it the enthusiasm and the pertinacity without which it would not have survived the vicissitudes of its earlier and more precarious life. The end in view was a more popular presentation of the rational and liberal exposition of religion to which the "Christian Disciple" gave a learned form, and that too infrequently. In 1824 the "Disciple" gave way to the "Christian Examiner," which had an honorable course till 1869. No one contributed more to its original standing and success than Channing, with his articles on Milton, Fénelon, and Napoleon. But a matter of much more denominational importance and definitiveness was the organization of the American Unitarian Association in 1825. Little knowing how good the omen, the Berry Street Conference on May 25, Emerson's birthday, appointed a meeting for the afternoon of that day, at which it was voted to form "a new society to be called the American Unitarian Association." It was John Pierpont, of heroic soul, who struck out boldly for the Unitarian name. There

were those who balked at it; notably Mr. Norton, who had made the first motion for a new organization in the Anonymous Club in the previous December.[1] In accordance with the terms of that motion there was a meeting on January 27, at which Dr. Channing was present with many others, clerical and lay, and the discussion, of which David Reed preserved a full account, was long and general. Dr. Channing's line was cautious, if not deterrent, and for some reason, although a committee was appointed to call another meeting, it declined to act. Nowhere is the liberal temper of that time disclosed more faithfully than in the minutes of the Berry Street meeting of January 27.

When the association was formed, May 25, Channing was chosen president, but pleaded physical disability. He was not a leader in the new organization except as in all meetings in which he took part he gravitated naturally to the highest place. "Wherever MacGregor sits, there is the head of the table." The leaders of the new organization were some of the younger and the youngest men: James Walker (31), Henry Ware, Jr. (31), Gannett (24); and the last of these was first. These took the lead, and kept it, though they drew in many aiders and abettors. Especially was young

[1] At the house of the Hon. Josiah Quincy. Quincy was one of eight distinguished laymen, — judges, mayors, etc., with a college president, — belonging to the Anonymous Association, the membership of which was numerically small. The energy and initiative of laymen in those days was in remarkable contrast with their present submergence in the clerical flood.

Gannett's flaming zeal conspicuous, — to some a warning, to many guiding home. Aaron Bancroft,[1] the historian's father, was the first president of the association; Ralph Waldo Emerson was one of its first missionary preachers.[2] It was no easy thing for Channing to keep the pace set by his eager and impulsive mate. He had his hesitations and reserves; was surprised that the business was getting on so fast, but never opposed himself to it, was never in the least unfriendly. The avowed purpose of the association — "to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity" — was as simple, as untheological, as if he had chosen the words. It was not the association which affrighted him with visions of "a Unitarian orthodoxy" as he lay upon his bed. After attending one of its annual meetings he wrote a friend delightedly: there had not been the slightest savor of the sectarian spirit. At another meeting he gave an elaborate address, insisting on the formation of character as the main purpose of the organization. At a third, we find him, strangely enough, though not inconsistently, opposing the in-

[1] Minister at Worcester, an able, influential man, who anticipated his son's predilection for history and wrote a good life of Washington.

[2] For many particulars see *Christian Register* for some weeks following the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Meeting in 1900, and Rev. George Willis Cooke's article in *New England Magazine* of same year; also an article by Dr. Samuel A. Eliot in *Christian Register*, September 19, 1901, based on researches of G. W. Cooke; best of all, G. W. Cooke's "Unitarianism in America," which comes to hand too late for me to profit by its careful presentation.

tersectarian management of the ministry to the poor: only Unitarians, as having a right view of human nature, were qualified for such a work. The doctrine of total depravity was an impossible educational basis.

It was a necessity with Channing to take a large and general view of every matter in which he had a vital interest. We are not then surprised to find him making a report of the Unitarian Association, together with reports of certain Temperance and Sabbath Observance societies, the text of one of his most elaborate discussions, "Remarks on Associations." The same strong wind blows through it as through his "Spiritual Freedom" of the following year. We do not wonder at Emerson's delight in Channing when we read this superb anticipation of his own "Self-Reliance." We have here as there the conspiracy of society against the individual set forth with unmistakable plainness of speech. The influence of the good may be hardly less pernicious than that of the bad. "There is no moral worth in being swept away by a crowd, even towards the best objects." "What many of us have to dread chiefly from society is, not that we shall acquire a positive character of vice, but that society will impose on us a negative character; that we shall live and die passive beings; that the creative and self-forming energy of the soul will not be called forth in the work of our improvement." "Could a perfect individual be found, we should injure ourselves by indiscrimi-

nate and servile imitation." But the value of associated action was not denied. "The value of associations is to be measured by the energy, the freedom, the activity, the moral power which they encourage and diffuse." It was by this standard that he would judge the Unitarian Association. In so far as it was "fitted to call forth energy, active talent, religious inquiry, a free and active virtue," it would justify itself and deserve men's confidence and loyalty. If it illustrated the dangers and not the possible, though difficult, advantages of associated action, it would be a cumberer of the ground.

CHAPTER VII

LETTERS AND POLITICS

It has been remarked by one of the many who have written upon Channing's intellectual and moral development that he returned from Europe a changed man; that henceforth we find him "less ministerial and more manly," as he expressly congratulated himself on being as he drew near the end of his career, more social in his temper and his aims, more robust or less meticulous in his speech and action. This writer has imagined the European journey to have furnished the line of division between the life of the recluse and that of the social reformer. But such sharp divisions, though convenient and attractive, commonly misstate the facts. The evolution of Channing's life was so uniformly from within outward, that no change of circumstance could seriously affect his character except as it afforded him an opportunity to enter more deeply into the springs of his own thought and action. This the European journey did for him in some degree, serving him the good turn the sojourn in Arabia served Paul, and the Wartburg the little Erfurt monk; making it possible for him to take account of stock more care-

fully than he could do in the discharge of his regular professional duties. But for the beginnings of that change which gives much the effect of contrast to Channing's life after 1825, as compared with the twenty years preceding, we must go back farther than to the European journey. The earliest beginnings of this change antedated the Unitarian Controversy as precipitated in 1815. But that controversy brought to it increments of distinct importance. It was somewhat with Channing as it was with Lowell and Whittier. We have had regrets that they were distracted by their antislavery ardors from the proper field of their activity — that of the poet's art. But the fact is that their antislavery ardors brought them to themselves and liberated their faculties for such poetical expression as we never should have had from these poets if the antislavery conflict had found them indifferent and left them cold. The natural operation of a theological controversy is to make men narrower. The particular controversy in which Channing engaged had no such effect on him. It broadened him. It increased his force, his freedom of thought and utterance; it invigorated his style. It fortified his self-respect and self-assertion. Though a new sect was developed by the controversy and he joined himself to its assembly, he was not made sectarian by this experience. The new sect was for him what Dr. Kirkland christened it, "the unsectarian sect." And the controversy did him a real service. It went far to break

up the cloistered habit of his life, which had been aggravated by his thorn in the flesh, — the recurrence of his periods of broken health; if I should not say the acuter manifestations of a disability from which he was never wholly free.

Careful investigation would, no doubt, assure us that the later Channing was an evolution from the earlier and earliest by a gradualism which left little room for catastrophic influences and effects. It would find Adam Ferguson's "Civil Society," read in his college days, and his communistic dreams at Richmond nourishing the germs of his interest in social problems and of his conception of Christianity as a means of improving the life that now is and not merely a promise of that which is to come. The distinction thrust upon him by the Unitarian Controversy; the fame achieved and the debate excited by his Baltimore sermon; the offer which came to him of the Dexter professorship in Harvard College, and which he eagerly accepted, only to find his health making it impossible; the violence of admiration which would have robbed Boston of his ministry to enrich Baltimore or New York, — all of these things conspired to give him a more public character, and obliged him to think of himself as something more than a mere theological recluse.

Simultaneously there came a noticeable invigoration of his thought and style. In the "Moral Argument against Calvinism" (1820), we find him criticising a style which, "intended to be ele-

gant, fell into jejuneness and insipidity. It delighted in words and arrangements of words which were little soiled by common use, and mistook a spruce neatness for grace." He fancied times had changed. "Men have learned more to write as they speak, and are ashamed to dress up familiar thoughts as if they were just arrived from a far country, and could not appear in public without a foreign and studied attire." The comment is suggested that Channing could more easily write as he talked, because he talked as he wrote, formally and precisely, with little of the ease and freedom that make good conversation. But it was something that he cherished an ideal of homelier things. There were those who thought his sermons characterized by that "smooth, watery flow of words" which he deprecated in his contemporaries. But all things are relative, and Channing's sermon-style avoided at once the barrenness of the Puritan inheritance and the floridity of the extreme revolt. It was significant of his manlier taste that, while hoping that the new strength would not degenerate into coarseness, he thought "even this would be a less evil than tameness and insipidity."

But as yet we have not touched what was a prime factor in the broadening of Channing's social consciousness and his relation to the social questions of his time — his interest in political affairs. This never had the concreteness of Theodore Parker's. In Parker's letters we are in a world of persons and personalities; we are continually running up against

this or that individual who is characterized in terms of unmistakable candor. In Channing's letters there is a painful lack of personal elements. Principles, not persons, were the main haunt and region of his mind. But the interest in politics that had been excited by that nipping air which, as a boy, he breathed with his father and grandfather in Newport, that later fed upon the passions which the French Revolution excited in the bosoms of American Federalists and Republicans, never lost its hold upon him. In his first Boston years, as earlier, an ardent Federalist, opposing the War of 1812 with something of partisan feeling mingled with his humane detestation, not even his depressing health availed to submerge him bodily in the slough of that pessimistic temper which the Essex "junto" cultivated with assiduous and acrid zeal. More than one aspect of the war incited him to public utterance in his own pulpit and elsewhere. This meant little courage, so sure was he of general applause. There was one grand exception to the impersonal character of Channing's private political writing and public speech. It was that of Napoleon. For a quarter of a century that mighty apparition bulked his ethical horizon, a fascinating and intolerable shape. One of his first great successes was his sermon on the downfall of Napoleon, delivered in King's Chapel, June 15, 1814. The Hundred Days and Waterloo were yet to come, but they were not to reverse the word of doom. It was at once a sign of Channing's promi-

nence and an immense enhancement of it that he was chosen for an occasion of such exalted public interest. Never before or after did Channing let himself go as in that passionate denunciation of Napoleon, and in that pæan over what seemed to be the ruinous end of his career. When he reached the climax of his description, "The oppressor is fallen and the world is free," there was tumultuous applause, a sound which those sacred walls had never echoed until then, and which Channing hastened gently to reprove.

The aristocratic temper of the Boston Federalists harmonized well enough with Channing's natural inclination, but little with his moral confidence in human nature; and the latter was bound to gain upon the former steadily. Always in Channing, and ever more pronouncedly, we have the aristocratic inclination, and the intellectual and moral criticism upon it and suppression of it. With a constitutional and educated "aloofness," equal to Emerson's, he did his best to force himself into the popular contacts that were proper to his deliberate estimate of social values and ideals. The Hartford Convention did more to repel him than to attract him closer to the Federalist party. In 1817, addressing a "Society for the Education of Indigent Boys," we find him saying things that must have been the gall of bitterness to his Federalist friends, and have encouraged the gods of the local Democracy to say, "He has become as one of us."

Should the history of the world be traced, I believe it would be found that society has derived a considerable portion of its best materials — I mean superior minds — from the inferior classes of society. . . . The higher classes have a tendency to intellectual imbecility, and need to be replenished from the lower. The looser relations of the poor are more favorable to native vigor, originality, freshness of thought, where real genius is possessed; and, from all this, it follows that the intellectual progress of a community, its mental activity, its energy of thought and action, will be promoted by extending to all classes the means of education, by giving everywhere to superior minds the opportunity of emerging and of lending their impulse to society.

In a social atmosphere so sensitive as that of Boston here was offence enough to tag him as a Jacobin, but we wonder less that this tag was affixed to him in the thirties, when, apart from his antislavery affiliations of those years, we read his article, "The Union," which appeared in 1829. It begins with a too generous defence of the Hartford Conventionists against the aspersions of John Quincy Adams,[1] which is a too genial construction of their purposes and spirit, and it ends with a lofty tribute to George Cabot, president of the Hartford Convention, which is qualified with ex-

[1] See Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, *passim*, and particularly vol. viii. We of the present time know much more than Channing did, or could, of the Hartford Convention, and Mr. Adams's *History* is a sufficient justification of his grandfather's opinions. Timothy Pickering and John Lowell were violent disunionists. Cabot, more absolutely distrustful of democracy, was of a less active or more cautious disposition.

pressive blame. "He wanted a just faith in man's capacity for freedom, at least in that degree of it which our institutions suppose. . . . He had too much the wisdom of experience. He wanted what may be called the wisdom of hope." In these respects he was a typical Federalist. "The Federalists as a body wanted a just confidence in our national institutions. They wanted that faith which hopes against hope and which freedom should inspire. Here was their sin, and it brought its penalty. . . . The taint of anti-republican tendencies was fastened upon them by their opponents, and this reproach no party could survive."

When this was first published the differentiation of the Republican (Democratic) party of that time into National Republicans (soon to be Whigs) and Democrats was rapidly going on. The divisive questions were those of a protective tariff and internal improvements. In the "Union" article, Channing with all possible frankness took the Democratic, anti-Federalist side. Granting that such internal improvements as would be beneficial to the whole country might justly be fostered by the general government, "but let Congress propose narrow local improvements, and we need no prophet to foretell the endless and ever-multiplying intrigues, the selfish combinations, the jealousies and discontents that will follow by a necessity as sure as the laws of nature." It was as if he saw the scandals of our successive river and harbor bills passing before him, like Mac-

beth's vision of the kings upon the witches' heath. To the protective tariff he addressed himself with more lively scorn. As habitually convinced as Herbert Spencer that "that is the best government which governs least," he said, "The crying sin of all governments is that they intermeddle injuriously with human affairs, and obstruct the processes of nature by excessive regulation." "The promotion of free, unrestricted commerce through the world" was a "sublime object of philanthropy." "Tariffs never will be impartial. They will always, in a greater or less degree, be the result of selfish combinations of private and public men, through which a majority will be secured to particular interests; and such is the blindness of avarice that to grasp a short-lived, partial good, the infinite blessings of union will be hazarded and thrown away."

When writing these things Channing had no longer his earlier assurance of wide public sympathy. Massachusetts had discovered that her interests, once commercial, were now manufacturing; protection was now her god, and Daniel Webster was its prophet. The splendid anti-protectionist of 1824 had become the obsequious apologist of 1828.[1] But even "a tariff for revenue only" was not agreeable to Channing's sense of justice. He hailed a future when "every custom-house should be shut from Maine to Louisiana." "The inter-

[1] See Henry Cabot Lodge's account and criticism of Webster's action in his *Daniel Webster*, American Statesmen Series.

ests of human nature require that every fetter should be broken from the intercourse of nations; that the most distant countries should exchange their products of manual or intellectual labor as freely as the members of the same community." As time went on, and the Republican party of those days was definitely parted into Democrats and Whigs, Channing held fast the integrity of his economic principles and sinned not with his mouth or pen. He never enunciated them so clearly as in 1841, and that, too, in Philadelphia, of all places in the world.

A reference in the "Union" article to the postal service, pleading for the use of every cent of its income to cheapen postal rates, is a reminder that this year (1829) was that of a great discussion of the Sunday mail service. Channing at first signed the petition to abolish this, but the report of Reverdy Johnson convinced him that he had done so on mistaken grounds. He had done so, not on account of the day's sacredness, but because he thought the Sunday mail increased the burdens of the postal clerks. Mr. Johnson convinced him to the contrary, and also that the prohibition was unconstitutional; and Channing hastened to make known his changed opinion, not without indignation at the unreflecting carelessness of those gentlemen whose signatures to the petition had seemed to him to justify his own.

It is certainly disappointing that in Channing's letters we have so little reference to the political

events that made the fourth decade of the nineteenth century such a noisy and excited one for the United States. It is possible that something of this disappointment is owing to the scruples of William Henry Channing, on whose anticipatory salvage we are obliged to place our principal reliance, since the destruction by fire, a few years since, of those parts of Channing's correspondence which his nephew did not use. In what remains to us, the amount of concrete political reference is infinitesimal. The great debate of Webster and Hayne, the South Carolina Nullification and Jackson's decisive action thereupon, the tariff concessions thereto, the removal of the deposits, "the expunging resolution," the suppression of the National Bank, the financial troubles, the "kitchen cabinet," to say nothing of Jackson's difficulties with Mrs. Eaton's social problem — all these things were, apparently, for Dr. Channing as if they had happened in another world. And indeed many of them had, for *his* world was one of principles, and too much one of abstract generalizations. He was not indifferent to persons, he was more than indifferent to personalities. The impersonal and uneventful character of his correspondence is an immense deduction from its charm. But there are many who supply his lack, few who invite us to his upper air. The antislavery movement furnishes only a partial exception to the rule of abstract character and generalized views. Channing adds nothing to our knowledge of its main

events, even when he was himself a part of them, and the lesser incidents do not exist for him.

Turning to Channing as a man of letters, it is of prime importance that we get the appropriate point of view. Neglecting this, we may well find ourselves astonished at the estimation in which he was held in his lifetime as a literary character and at his own literary self-consciousness. His purely literary output, or what was then considered so, was limited to three or four articles in the "Christian Examiner," which were published between the years 1825 and 1830. I say "three or four," because the two Napoleon articles were one article in two parts. In our own time for a distinguished clergyman to drop into literature flutters nobody. He may drop to the depth of a short story or a novel, or into poetry, and we are not surprised. But Dr. Channing's "Examiner" articles were great events in Boston and beyond when they appeared. Dr. Furness tells us that he was surprised to find Dr. Channing making the Milton venture. In the Unitarian circle, after the first doubt of its propriety had subsided, it was probably thought superior to Macaulay's "Milton," which had appeared a year earlier in the "Edinburgh Review." Something must be pardoned, Dr. Furness says, to the admiration of the small new sect for what was done by its own chief. More must be pardoned to the state of literature at that time in the United States. About 1830 Channing wrote certain elaborate "Remarks on Na-

tional Literature," which should go to the account of his literary achievement. The article was written in the future tense. The writer was no *laudator temporis acti*. He calls no honored names except those strangely contrasted ones of Edwards and Franklin. A better illustration of the *lucus a non lucendo* it would be hard to find. And yet in 1830 there were some brave beginnings of the century's literature which a less abstract method than Channing's would have interwoven with the texture of his prophetical discourse. That he was kin with Allston and Dana may have made him less than kind to them, but Bryant had already written his best pieces, "Thanatopsis" and "A Forest Hymn," still unexcelled; Pierpont some admirable things; while if Charles Brockden Brown's chamber of horrors did not invite him, Irving's "Sketch Book" should have done so, and Cooper's likeness to Scott should not have been sufficient to obscure the rugged strength of his own proper face. But when Channing's articles appeared there was no such "mob of gentlemen who write with ease" and write extremely well as we have now. Judged by purely literary standards, hundreds of these write better than Channing. But "in the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king," and it is not strange that under the general conditions that prevailed from 1825 to 1830 Channing's literary product earned for him the enthusiastic admiration of his co-religionists and of many who were not joined to their assembly.

It is eloquent of Channing's confidence in his own powers that having read Macaulay's essay he should follow it up with his own. Bracketing the two in one reading, I find Macaulay's, though it was his first "Edinburgh" essay and had faults which he outgrew, incomparably superior to Channing's as literature, while Channing's leaves a moral afterglow which is more inspiring than the dazzling brilliancy of Macaulay's noonday light. Channing's introductory defence of poetry, which seems to us remarkable for its banality, probably seemed much less flat to the "Examiner" public. The criticism upon Milton's poetry, to those of us who have read the criticisms of Scherer and Seeley and Arnold and Pattison, must seem frail indeed compared with theirs. It is when we come to the discussion of Milton's religious and ecclesiastical opinions that Channing is himself again. He is against Milton's opinion that the primitive church was meant to be a model for all ages; "that Christianity, instead of being carried forward, was to be carried *back* to its original purity." He is for him when he would "strip the clergy of that peculiar artificial sanctity, with which superstition has long arrayed them, and which has made their simple, benignant office one of the worst instruments of ambition and despotism." He would not have an ignorant ministry, but he would not have religious instruction a monopoly of ministers; he would have men of superior intelligence engaging in it and substituting "a more natural, free, and various

eloquence for the technical and monotonous mode of treating subjects which clings so obstinately to the performances of the pulpit." Of evolution before Spencer, perhaps more Channing's than Milton's, we have a good example where Channing says of the great classical Puritan, —

> He believed justly that all the periods and generations of the human family are bound together by a sublime connection, and that the wisdom of each age is chiefly a derivation from all preceding ages, not excepting the most ancient, just as a noble stream through its whole extent and in its widest overflowings still holds communion with its infant springs.

Describing Milton, Channing unconsciously described himself: "He rendered to mankind a far greater service than that of a teacher of an improved theology. He taught and exemplified that spirit of intellectual freedom, through which all the great conquests of truth are to be achieved and by which the human mind is to attain to a new consciousness of its sublime faculties and to invigorate and expand itself forever."

Henry T. Tuckerman, a critic much valued in his generation, writing of Dr. Channing in a tone of mild depreciation, makes an allegation which must be very shocking to those whose admiration of Channing is without any qualification. He says, "Egotism was a striking trait in Dr. Channing." Those who know Channing best will know precisely what this means and what measure of truth there is in it. For it does contain a measure of truth.

Mr. Tuckerman furnished various particulars: "The first person singular appears on every page of his writings." Yes, and often because he would have it understood that he is only saying what *he* thinks. "His opinions are rather announced as truths than suggested as possibilities." Yes, because by long and deep meditation they had become inwrought with the substance of his personality. "He had the serious, collected air of one who had enjoyed special revelations;" "his calm trust in himself communicates itself to his writings and acts, and hence the authority they exert over the multitude." Mr. Tuckerman finds in this trait that which "gives nerve and clearness to Dr. Channing's diction and impressiveness to his style." Acknowledging its reality, I find in it a deeper significance, — Channing's complete surrender to the sway of his few leading thoughts. It was as entrusted with these that he could not but take himself very seriously. The apparent egotism was his recognition of the impersonal truth. It was the egotism of that self-effacement which declares, "The words which I speak unto you are not mine, but the Father's that sent me."

It is not to be denied, however, that an acute self-consciousness was one of the most characteristic attributes of Channing's personality. It was fostered by the isolating habits of his life; by the immense deference that was paid to him, try as he would to check its grosser exhibitions; by his apprehension of the greatness of the human soul, in

which, in virtue of his human character, he shared. That there were defects of these qualities only the blind or wilful can deny. There were defects, too, of the larger quality, — his entire possession with the grandeur of his thought and work. He was too prone to make this a universal standard, to go to books and men for confirmation of it, and not simply for what they had to give. All his reading came around to this at last. The climax of his praise of Milton is that he was another Channing in his main intent; the climax of his dispraise of Napoleon is that he was not a man of the Channing kind, a man of the brooding intellect and the reformer's zeal. This was the brunt of Hazlitt's criticism, and it was well conceived. A defect of sympathy was the concomitant of Channing's profound engrossment in his personal ideals. He had no use for men who sailed by other stars. He might praise them with his lips, but his heart was far from them. He might recognize them in set terms, but the emphasis of his enthusiasm and insistence was exclusively upon the words of his peculiar message and on his own type of personality. So it happened that he was not a discerner of spirits. William Henry Channing writes that the Fénelon of the Fénelon article is Channing himself. He is too much so. In many things Fénelon was quite other than Channing. When we read Sainte-Beuve, the perfect critic, upon Fénelon, we appreciate the defect of Channing's method. Sainte-Beuve is disengaging for us Fénelon's personality;

Channing is taking another text for his habitual presentation of his besetting thought.

Lamb, asked by Coleridge, "Did you ever hear me preach?" replied with his habitual stammer that he had never heard him do anything else. To Channing, asking the same question, a candid friend might properly have made Lamb's answer. He was subdued to the business that he worked at to a degree of which he was painfully conscious, and against which he chafed, but which he could not put off. In his letters and conversation he slid easily into the sermon tone. So in the "Examiner" articles. The best part of the Fénelon article reproduces the great sermon on self-denial, the contention in either case being that we should not deny our reason. The second article on Napoleon reads like a slightly altered sermon on temptations to the abuse of power. In the first there are swelling passages which read as if written with the Sunday audience in the writer's mind. We know Napoleon as Channing did not, for better and for worse. Could he have read Lanfrey's story of his diplomatic treacheries, he might have dipped his pen in blacker ink. But he does less than justice to the intellectual and civic Napoleon of the great Code. In general the article differs from a biographical study much as a fourteenth-century "morality" differs from one of Shakespeare's plays. But for preaching it is grand. Because Channing's preaching so fed upon his vitals, he had little strength for other things. The preacher in

him was a jealous sovereign who could admit no brother near the throne.

If the "Examiner" articles brought upon him encomiums that were excessive, they brought upon him censures which erred in like manner and degree. The most famed of these were Hazlitt's and Brougham's articles in the "Edinburgh Review." It was Channing's apparent invasion of the literary sphere that invited these reprisals. Had he remained simply the preacher he would, probably, have been let alone. It was "significant of much" that an essayist of Hazlitt's standing and a politician of Lord Brougham's should consider Channing a fit subject for their sublime denunciation. It meant for one thing that Channing had, especially when Brougham wrote, in 1839, an English vogue which no other American writer had at that time achieved. Hazlitt's review appeared in 1829.[1] He said, "We like Dr. Channing's Sermons best; his Criticisms less; his Politics the least of all." To the first term of this series no one can demur. Many, and the most of us, would invert the order of the second and the third. But to Hazlitt, who had glorified Napoleon in four volumes octavo, Channing's politics meant his execration of Napoleon's character and career.[2] Hazlitt was right in

[1] It was based upon *Sermons and Tracts; including Remarks on the Character and Writings of Milton and of Fénelon; and an Analysis of the Character of Napoleon Bonaparte.* This collection anticipated the first American collection of Channing's writings, the copyright of which was not taken out until April, 1830.

[2] Charles Sumner's senior part in 1830 reflected severely upon

his contention that, making an example of Napoleon, his ethical abstraction did scant justice to the immense variety of Napoleon's genius. To see only the selfish and cruel tyrant in that personal congeries of stupendous gifts and powers was significant of a certain narrowness in Channing's ethical obsession. He galled Hazlitt's kibe in another fashion when he separated himself from that Socinian type of Unitarianism to which Hazlitt's father, a Unitarian minister,[1] was attached. But what must have confounded Channing's American friends and admirers beyond measure was the assault on Channing's intellectual morality: —

> Dr. Channing is a great tactician in reasoning; and reasoning has nothing to do with tactics. We do not like to see a writer constantly trying to steal a march upon opinion without having his retreat cut off — full of pretensions and void of offence. It is as bad as the opposite extreme of outraging decorum at every step; and is only a more covert mode of attracting attention, and gaining surreptitious applause. We never saw anything more guarded in this respect than Dr. Channing's "Tracts and Sermons," — more completely suspended between heaven and earth. He keeps an eye on both worlds; kisses hands to the reading public all round; and does his best to stand well with different sects and parties. He is always in advance of the line, in an amiable and imposing attitude, but never far from succor.

Channing's view, possibly taking its cue from Hazlitt's article. He came round to Channing in due course and in general looked to him for guidance as to no other person, until Channing's death.

[1] Who, as we have seen in chap. iv., had helped Dr. Freeman's Boston Unitarianism to a happy birth.

It would be difficult to frame an indictment less correspondent with Channing's traditional reputation than was this. His Unitarian friends, and, more obviously, his orthodox opponents, must have wondered whether the British edition of Channing's writings had not been emasculated, or, possibly, another set of writings been published under his name. But Hazlitt's savage criticism may well give us momentary pause. It reflects the caution of Channing's intellectual procedure, his anxiety to do justice to all sides; and it reminds us that what would have been timidity in the longitude of London was courage in the longitude of Boston, — in the little Puritan town as compared with the great metropolis. We can never take a just measure of Channing's moral stature and the courage of his opinions without a relative appreciation of the stunting atmosphere in which he grew, the scared and petrified conservatism from which he freed himself as best he could. As an account of Channing's inner consciousness and his relation to the public and his work, a grosser misconception than that of Hazlitt's article would be quite impossible.

But Lord Brougham's criticism was that of one resolved to better Hazlitt's instructions, however hard it might go with Channing. It was interesting to me to find that its next neighbor in the "Edinburgh," which had gathered "dust o' books" for more than sixty years, was Macaulay's famous review of Gladstone's "Church and State," in the opening paragraph of which he describes Gladstone

as "the rising hope of" certain "stern and unbending Tories." Less contrary was that hope to Gladstone's ultimate repute than Lord Brougham's view of Channing's literary ambition to the fact of his habitual simplicity. It is against Channing's style that he directs his accusation. "False Taste — Dr. Channing" runs the head-line through some sixteen pages. Channing is held up as a flagrant example of euphuistic prettiness and of intentional and meaningless obscurity — vices from which Channing sought and prayed to be delivered as from a dreadful fate. The accusation was a strange one as directed against an author whose writing has fitly been described as "naked thought," — of whom Renan wrote, "His works display no literary ambition." But Brougham had found a handle in a passage in the Milton article, where Channing had a good word to say for Milton's tortuous obscurity. He never wrote anything less characteristic, anything more at variance with his habitual endeavor to make his meaning plain. And who of us would not give acres of Lord Brougham's and much other perspicuity for a few patches of Milton's daring and splendid involution? Channing's eccentricity from his habitual orbit was at this point one of the most pardonable aberrations of his life. But Lord Brougham referred his readers to particular passages in Channing as guilty of that obscurity which Channing had too rashly praised. The trouble was, in part, that Channing was endeavoring to find a language for realities

which evaded Brougham's utilitarian rule of thumb. At the same time there may have been some justification of the charges made. Renan was too genial, and not accurate, when he said, "There is not one of Channing's writings that exhibits the smallest pretensions to art and style." Channing was the conscious stylist in all his published writings. In the "Examiner" articles he was more ambitious than elsewhere, and striving for a richer, struck a falser note. Generally his style is remarkable for its lucidity. He knew that some things were impossible for him. Charles Lamb's style was his ideal of perfection; Goldsmith's contending with it. But he wrote to Miss Aikin that, while he thought himself able to do something in a kind of eloquent writing, the ease and charm of Addison and Goldsmith were heights that he could never reach.

It is commonly set down to his credit that he never read Brougham's article. His not doing so was one of his mistakes. If he had conned and inwardly digested it, it might have done him good. He was, perhaps, too disdainful of external aids. It is permitted us to believe that a more liberal scholarship and a fuller habit of reading would not have been detrimental to his mind and work. A scholar he was not; though suffering the linguistic tools of his profession, Greek and Hebrew, to rust in a less degree than many of the clergy now, or even then. Of the New Testament he was a persistent student in the naïve, unscientific

fashion of his time. He was probably a good Latinist, and well skilled in French, reading his Fénelon in a splendid set of quartos, which have to-day lost but little of their first magnificence. Madame de Staël's "Germany" first introduced him to German literature. Upon the philosophic side, it brought him confirmation of many things he had been thinking privately. Coleridge and Carlyle took him farther on that road, but where the translators failed him, he stopped short. He knew Richter and Schiller and Goethe well, — Schiller's personality appealing to him more than Goethe's, whose selfishness was an offence. As for Channing's general reading, it was much more extensive than it has commonly been represented. It was far enough from Theodore Parker's insatiable voracity, and the meat on which he fed was not that purveyed by the great scholars. Nor had he Parker's passion for old books. The new and newest had for him a much greater attraction. He enjoyed the shock of such a manner as Carlyle's, reading everything he wrote with avid interest; so Emerson's earlier things. For a good idea of his general reading, one cannot do better than to go to Miss Peabody's "Reminiscences" and his correspondence with Miss Aikin, in whose literary friendship he was fortunate. A daughter of Dr. John Aikin, and a niece of Mrs. Barbauld, she was a writer of no mean ability on historical and other lines. In his letters to her, less constrained and pleasanter as they go on, we get a picture of

his everyday mind that is most attractive and agreeable. Not that the letters on either side are ideal letters. The correspondence was too much an exchange of brief essays on current reading and events. But Dr. Channing's letters have this advantage over Miss Peabody's reports of his conversations, — we know in them that we are getting Dr. Channing pure and simple, and of that we are never quite sure with Miss Peabody's reports. Often we have that effect of the Fourth Gospel, where the great teacher's style is so much that of the narrator that it breeds suspicion. But read either Miss Peabody's "Reminiscences" or the Aikin letters, and we find that Channing's reading was quite other than that modicum of the ordinary misapprehension heretofore. It included the best and better books of his generation to a liberal extent. If it is hard to sympathize with certain of his admirations, we may well ask ourselves if our own are likely to bear the tests of time and tide as well. Mrs. Hemans and Joanna Baillie do not stir us now, but they might with better warrant than some of our own time to whom we are more partial. What Scott thought of Miss Baillie and Miss Edgeworth makes Channing's opinion of them at least respectable. Some of us are going back to Miss Edgeworth with considerable zest. If Channing went astray in thinking so much of Scott (Howells *judice*), he went astray with a large company, including nearly all the better spirits of his own and later times. I recall no reference to Jane Austen,

but I trust he did not miss that fountain of unspoiled delight.

Channing's favorite contemporary poet was Wordsworth, and therein he made no mistake. He knew him well, and though he seldom quoted him, we often are aware, some whiff of scent apprising us, that his vase has been with Wordsworth's rose. It is possible that his delight in Coleridge's prose made relatively dim his satisfaction in his incomparable verse. His attraction to Southey seems to have been less than was common in his day, and to have anticipated the verdict of posterity. Shelley he called "a seraph gone astray," a designation having in it more of praise than blame. If he did not care for Keats, it was perhaps because he was discouraged by the over-sweetness of "Endymion." His judgment of Byron was that his letters testified to his intellectual force as did not his poetry. This was one of many of Channing's judgments that the consensus of time and criticism has confirmed. At all points there was a sharp reaction on the books he read. He prized them to the degree they made him think, sending him back upon his "central solitude" to see how they agreed or disagreed with what was there. He read widely in history and biography, and in moral and social philosophy. The depreciation of his reading, heretofore, is mainly a caricature of the fact that his reading was the smaller part of his intellectual life; the larger was his meditation on the books he read and on the ideas that arose in his own mind.

A more meditative habit I have not found in any one of many dozens of biographies. For days and weeks together he turned things over in his mind, getting every possible light upon them. He was never happier than when some new book confirmed effectively his own dearest thoughts. By this hoop of steel he was grappled to Degerando,[1] whose "Du Perfectionnement Moral" brought back the glow of his young joy in Hutcheson. Channing's originality was far less that of novelty than that of vital appropriation. Not only did he "pounce upon his own wherever he found it" with keen avidity, but he made others' thoughts his own by the sincerity with which he adopted them, by the free and careful consent of his deliberate thought. No man's body of thought was ever, I think, more honestly his own than Channing's, so patiently did his convictions wait upon his brooding quietness, and meet the challenge of his hesitations and his doubts.

Our next step is to a consideration of the message which he brought with him from his study into the high pulpit of the Federal Street Church.

[1] Channing singles him out in his *National Literature*, where he is pleading for other European aids to reflection than those furnished by England. I use Channing's form of the French writer's name, though I believe Gerando is the more proper. The book was translated by Miss Peabody in 1830, and republished in 1860. The translation "endeavors to be strictly faithful to the author's ideas, while keeping in mind a decidedly different style of expression." Gerando was one of the men to whom Channing gave young Sumner letters when he went abroad in 1838. For Sumner's visit to Gerando, see Pierce's *Memoir of Sumner*, i. 254, 255.

Before entering upon this I would fain produce some image of the man as he appeared to those whose privilege it was to attend upon his ministration of religion. Of Gambardella's portrait, painted in 1839, we are assured that it is "remarkably faithful," indeed "faultless." The same friend[1] from whose lips we had these things a few years since, tells of a velvet softness in his face, and of his smile "all the sweeter for the appearance around the mouth of physical weakness, through which it struggled, a sunbeam through a cloud." The rather high cheek bones and hollow cheeks gave him an emaciated look. In bodily presence Paul was not more weak. Short of stature, he was slight of frame and very spare of flesh. His person conveyed the impression of such feebleness as made his hold on life seem a precarious tenure. Robert Collyer was once the proud possessor of one of Channing's coats. Like Samuel's it was, he said, a little one, as if made for a boy. But Mr. Collyer may have compared it with his own. His great fist beside Channing's little one would have afforded a more notable contrast. When Channing told Dr. Furness that he "could n't *strike* a man," Dr. Furness could not help wondering if the man would feel it if he did. But Channing's slight physical habit was somewhat obscured by the manner of his pulpit dress. I have seen the

[1] William Henry Furness, born in 1802, was ordained in 1825, and at the same time installed minister of the Philadelphia Society, of which he was pastor emeritus when he died in 1896.

beautiful silk belted gown which he wore in the pulpit under his surplice; also the thick quilted silk cloak or long cape that he wore over the gown from his house to the church,[1] and the tiny bands which he discarded at some time in the course of his ministry. I have seen one of his neck-cloths, wonderful for its fineness and for the narrowest hem imaginable. With his throat swathed in that cradle sheet, I wonder that his vocal organs could produce an audible sound. But what says Dr. Furness? —

His voice, — ah, that wonderful voice! — wonderful not for the music of its tones, but for its extraordinary power of expression. Whether from the delicacy of the vocal organ or from bodily weakness, I do not know, it was flexible to tremulousness. When he began to discourse, it ran up and down, even in the articulation of a single polysyllabic word, in so strange a fashion that they who heard him for the first time could not anticipate its effect, — how, before it ceased, that voice would thrill them to the inmost. I cannot liken it to anything but a huge sail, flapping about at first at random, but soon taking the wind, swelling out most majestically, as Sydney Smith said of Sir James Mackintosh that, "when the spirit came upon him, he spread his enormous canvas, and launched into a wide sea of eloquence."

[1] Mrs. Dall writes me of seeing him enter the pulpit wearing a large red shawl, and blames his wife for that defect of taste. But Dr. Channing had a will of his own, and Mrs. Channing did not often err upon the side of taste. Where Channing was indifferent except to neatness, she had an exquisite regard for his apparel. Only the finest underwear, she thought, was good enough for him, when, had he known in what fine silk and linen he was dressed, a hair-cloth shirt would less have torn his flesh.

Æt. 31

W. E. Channing

We have had many testimonies to the magic of that voice and to the luminous dilation of the deep-set gray eyes. There was an illusion of increasing physical height and amplitude as his discourse drew on to its deeper part. His reading of hymns and Bible passages is described as exceedingly impressive. A stillness waited on it that could be felt and almost heard, it was so positive. He made single words so big with meaning, says Dr. Furness, that could the eye have reproduced them they would have covered the side wall of the church. Here was something very different from Whitefield's mellifluous "Mesopotamia." Here was the enlargement of the informing soul. The strength of Dr. Channing's preaching was that of his conviction of the reality of his message and its importance to men's lives. Those who heard him felt that his inmost soul was uttering itself in sermon, hymn, and prayer. "Preaching," says Dr. Dewey, "was the great *action* of his life. It was the greatest action that could be demanded of any life." If ever a man magnified his office, Channing did so, and in the loftiest possible way. He could not imagine a more sacred task than that which every sermon called him to perform.

In W. H. Channing's somewhat grandiloquent account of his uncle's preaching we read with special pleasure of "the owners of pews hospitably welcoming strangers," for such was not the Boston manner of those days. Rather a man's pew was his castle, as was not his house. But the social

bonds may well have been dissolved for those caught up into the preacher's vision of a new humanity in which men would be brothers all. The sermon over, there was little remaining in the preacher of that nervous elasticity with which he had hurried up the pulpit stairs. The virtue had gone out of him. He was now to pay the penalty of physical and cerebral prostration and collapse; of sleepless, agitated hours. Reading of this recurrent aspect of his suffering and heroic life, one thinks of Shelley's self-description in the "Adonais," and feels that it was not inapplicable to Channing; that here, too, was —

> a power
> Girt round with weakness, that could scarce uplift
> The weight of the superincumbent hour.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT CHANNING PREACHED

It would be an abuse of terms to say that for our knowledge of what Channing preached we are limited to the six volumes[1] published in 1841 and to the volume published in 1873, "The Perfect Life," because the fulness of this representation of his mind prevents any sense of limitation. If, in addition, we had all the manuscript sermons that were destroyed by that melancholy burning on the transcontinental train (September, 1900), it is unlikely that they would add much to our impression. This might, with their help, be more extensive than it is now; it could hardly be more intensive. There is no aspect of Channing's preaching or his thought which is not fully illustrated by the volumes of 1841 and "The Perfect Life." These, moreover, have the advantage of being of his own selection. This is true in a hardly less degree of "The Perfect Life" than of the six earlier volumes. The twelve sermons in that volume he stamped with his approval

[1] Now published in one volume by the American Unitarian Association, with *The Perfect Life*, 1060 pages, 8vo. The three volumes of the *Memoir* have been made similarly inexpensive and compact, 719 pages, 8vo.

by his frequent preaching of them, and he set some of them apart with a view to publication. It must be understood that the order of their present arrangement is that of the editor, W. H. Channing, not that of Dr. Channing, and that it does not correspond to the order in which they were written and preached. The progressive order in which the nephew arranged them is very ingenious, but not quite convincing. The little volume called "Dr. Channing's Note-Book," selected and published by Grace Ellery Channing in 1887, is profoundly interesting, but it gives us only new varieties of Channing's thought — no new species. The same is true of the projected work on Man,[1] from which we have some fragments in the "Memoir" and some suggestive sentences in the "Note-Book." Both confirm the opinion of Renan. Had the book been written it would have added a little to our knowledge of Dr. Channing's philosophical opinions (as idealistic as those of Emerson's "Nature"), but in a form that would have been less engaging than his sermons, though we may be sure that the sermon note would have been often heard. The range of Channing's preaching was not wide, and if we only had the one volume of 1830[2] we should be hardly less secure than we are

[1] Of which Renan says: "The plan of this book was neither new nor original. It would have been an essay, like so many others, on man and human nature, the perpetual theme of the Anglo-Scotch philosophy, and no exception to the weariness of books of this sort."

[2] I write with this at hand, a handsome royal octavo, the

now on pulpit lines; but we should be incomparably poorer on lines of sociology and philanthropy, including the antislavery writings.

The larger unity of Channing's thought, when he had got so far as "midway on the road of our life," so far transcended its particular variations that I am, I trust, justified in making a general exposition of his preaching at this stage of my advance, and in helping myself with equal freedom from the material produced before and after 1830.[1] Of its controversial import up to this date I have already said enough, and that part of his theology which he held in common with his Unitarian contemporaries, in a general way, need not detain us long. Whatever his anticipations of more modern thought, any conscious suspicion of the soundness of his supernaturalist theory of Christianity was not among them. He was as thoroughgoing a supernaturalist as any of his orthodox opponents. For the best expression of his Christian supernaturalism we must go to the Dudleian Lecture of 1821. One may have travelled far from this out-

liberal page suiting the liberal thought. It has a personal interest for me because it was the valued possession of Dr. Charles Cotton, of Newport, a descendant of the Rev. John Cotton, of Boston, England and Massachusetts, and was presented to him by a near relative of Washington Allston. In 1832 a second volume was published. It contained sermons only — eleven of these — which were all taken up into the six volumes of 1841 (the sixth 1843). The selection was made by Dr. Dewey, Dr. Channing's health proving unequal to the task.

[1] The volume of 1830, less the plain-spoken preface, which gave so much offence, was taken up bodily into the six-volume edition of 1841.

look and yet not be so dull that he cannot enter into the enthusiasm which was aroused by Channing's exposition. Its arguments were the stock arguments of the time, but they were presented in a remarkably persuasive manner. There was demur at those who, doubting the miraculous evidence for Christianity, were inclined to rest it wholly on internal evidence; "for Christianity is not only confirmed by miracles, but is in itself, in its very essence, a miraculous religion. It is not a system which the human mind might have gathered in the ordinary course of nature." No note recurs more frequently than this in Channing's earlier statements, but its variations widen as he goes on until we have a new species: the supernatural designed to *concentrate* the natural; the glory of the former its *resemblance* to the best produced by the latter and not its *difference* from it. In the Dudleian we have, representatively, the endeavor of the whole contemporary school to reconcile acceptance of the New Testament miracles with a general distrust of the miraculous. The character of those miracles and the moral necessity for their occurrence are found to plead for them. Here is the concession that the less the miracle, the likelier is it to be a valid one, and we skirt the coasts of Locke's opinion that the doctrine proves the miracle more than the miracle the doctrine. Channing argues the supernatural character of Christianity both from the incompetency of the human mind to produce it, and from the incom-

petency of the times and circumstances in which, and under which, it appeared. Nowhere is he less his proper self than in the first contention; nowhere more subject to the limitations of his time than in the second. His characteristic exaltation of human nature should have prevented his saying that "being partakers of it [human nature] we can judge with sufficient accuracy of the operation of its principles and of the effects to which they are competent." That exaltation of human nature should have made it easy for him to conceive of such a "sun of righteousness" as Jesus, swinging with easy and unfettered motion in its boundless space. The limitations of his time appear in the astonishing assertion that we "can discover in Jesus no impression of the time in which he lived." Our later scholarship has not so learned Christ. It finds his time full of anticipations of his thought and of agreements with it.[1] As for the personality of Jesus, personality is something that can never be accounted for. Its most splendid apparitions add little to our persuasion of "the transmission of acquired traits," and advise us that we should expect to be frequently and incalculably surprised. If all these surprises, except that of Jesus, are accounted "natural," why make of him "a party by himself"?

A further limitation of his time is shown in Channing's treatment of the Gospels, his elaborate pleading that they are not forgeries. No one who

[1] See Professor C. H. Toy's *Judaism and Christianity.*

has any critical standing now considers that they are. Our present understanding is that these gospels "grew as grows the grass" and that, doing so, in many particulars they grew away from the prime facts of Jesus' history; that there was, within the limits of the New Testament, a progressive idealization of his person and office, and that a similar process, quite as active, filled in the gap between the original events and the proto-Mark or first written document of any kind.

Emerson was not the only young man who was greatly impressed by the Dudleian Lecture. His friend William Henry Furness also heard it gladly and got from it an impulse that lasted him more than seventy years. The passage which gave it was that on the internal evidence of the truth of the New Testament narratives from their naturalness and naïve simplicity. All that Dr. Furness wrote on this subject was an expansion of that passage. The original passage and the expansion suggest the criticism that the natural selection of a growing legend is as simple and naïve as any possible product of the most unstudied individual narrator.

The growth of Channing's mind can nowhere be traced more plainly than in those parts of his writings which convey his views of Christianity. The chronological order cannot always be made out, but, in so far as it can be, it makes for the impression that while always holding fast to the supernaturalist view, his emphasis upon it steadily decreased, and

his recommendation of Christianity to his hearers became steadily more rational and moral. While there is much scattered evidence to this effect, it is heaped up conspicuously in the sermons "Christianity a Rational Religion," "The Great Purpose of Christianity" (1828), and two sermons on the "Evidences of Christianity," which were included in the 1832 volume, while for the climax of this development we cannot do better than to read the tenth and the eleventh sermons in "The Perfect Life," which are "The Essence of the Christian Religion" and "Perfect Life the End of Christianity." In "Christianity a Rational Religion" we seem to have passed already from the early view that the contents of Revelation, albeit rational, could not have been attained by reason without supernatural aid. The contention is that "revelation is founded on the authority of reason and cannot therefore oppose or disparage it without subverting itself." "Reason alone makes us capable of receiving a revelation." "A religion claiming to be from God can give no surer proof of falsehood than contradiction of those previous truths which God is teaching in our very nature." "Nothing but the approving sentence of reason binds us to receive and obey revelation." He does not find revelation teaching "all things necessary to salvation;" "I must not think it the only source of instruction to which I must repair." There is here, he assures us, no "pride of reason," for pride finds its delight in its sense of superiority;

but reason is "the common property of all human beings." For "pride of reason" we must go to men's "infatuated trust in their own infallibility," their "impatience of contradiction," their "arrogance towards those differing from them in opinion." The general argument for the rationality of Christianity is from its internal consistency, and its consistency with other truths, and from its universality.

In the two sermons of "Evidences" the main course of the argument is much the same as in the Dudleian Lecture, but the change of temper is shown by a noble introductory passage in which Channing contended for the possibility of an unbelief more excellent and honorable than the current orthodoxy of the time. "Our religion is at this moment adopted and passionately defended by vast multitudes on the ground of the very same pride, worldliness, love of popularity, and blind devotion to hereditary prejudices which led the Jews and Heathens to reject it in the primitive age." "To confess Jesus at the present moment argues no moral courage. It may even betray a servility and worldliness of mind."

When I think what Christianity has become in the hands of politicians and priests, how it has been shaped into a weapon of power, how it has crushed the human soul for ages, how it has struck the intellect with palsy and haunted the imagination with superstitious phantoms, how it has broken whole nations to the yoke, and frowned on every free thought; when I think how,

under almost every form of this religion, its ministers have taken it into their own keeping, have hewn and compressed it into the shape of rigid creeds, and have then pursued by menaces of everlasting woe whoever should question the divinity of these works of their hands; when I consider, in a word, how, under such influences, Christianity has been and still is exhibited, in forms which shock alike the reason, conscience, and heart, I feel deeply, painfully, what a different system it is from that which Jesus taught, and I dare not apply to unbelief the terms of condemnation which belonged to the infidelity of the primitive age.[1]

It may be said here, very properly, that by this time such "unbelief" as Channing's could be expressed in Boston with as little expense of courage as the traditional belief. When Dr. Lyman Beecher was brought to Boston in 1826 to withstand the rising flood of Unitarianism with a form of orthodoxy that was all the more vehement because of its individual note, — an enterprise that met with good success, — his account of the condition of affairs was epitomized after this fashion: —

All the literary men of Massachusetts were Unitarian; all the trustees and professors of Harvard College were Unitarian; all the *élite* of wealth and fashion crowded Unitarian churches; the judges on the bench were Unitarian, giving decisions by which the peculiar features of church organization so carefully ordered by

[1] Sentences so long as this were frequent in Channing's earlier writings, infrequent in the later. Some of the sermons in *The Perfect Life* go to the opposite extreme, and the effect is choppy; partly from the use of periods where semicolons had been used aforetime.

the Pilgrim Fathers had been nullified, and all the power had passed into the hands of the congregation.

In the Motte ordination sermon of 1828, we have "the great purpose of Christianity" declared to be the strengthening and uplifting of the mind, the elevation of the soul. We have left far behind the doctrine of the earlier sermons which put special emphasis on future happiness. The preacher deprecates the separation of Christian virtue from its rewards. Men "think of being Christians for the sake of something beyond the Christian character, something more precious. That the chief reward lies in the very spirit of religion they do not dream." But it is to the tenth and eleventh sermons of "The Perfect Life" that we must go for the ripest form of Channing's thought of Christianity. In the former of these, "The Essence of the Christian Religion," he says, "I believe that Christianity has ONE GREAT PRINCIPLE which is *central*, around which all its truths gather, and which constitutes it the Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God: it is the doctrine that God purposes, in his unbounded Fatherly Love, to PERFECT THE HUMAN SOUL;[1] to purify it from all sin; to fill it with his own spirit; to unfold it forever." No word was oftener on Channing's lips, or in his thought, than "perfection." It was significant of

[1] W. H. Channing is probably responsible for the use of capitals and small capitals in this passage. Channing was very sparing of such devices, even his pronouns referring to the Deity being without capitals.

an idea that was with him in the early college days, and, like

> Divine Alpheus, who, by secret sluice,
> Stole underseas,

it reappeared beyond the flood of his Hopkinsian time, and added strength to strength. But what he meant by perfection was never something statical; it was always something dynamic, a "career of endless improvement." The thought of his "Essence of Christianity" is reiterated in the next sermon, "Perfect Life the End of Christianity." He said, "I affirm that Excellence of Character is the Great Object of Christianity; is the Great Blessing which Christ came to Communicate." By this standard he tried men, Jesus, God. Perfect goodness is the supreme good, the only good for men. The goodness of Jesus is all that recommends him to our love. So far as his death has any significance for us, it is as an example of his goodness. The love of God — it is the love of goodness; it is nothing less than this, and can be nothing more. "The adoration of goodness — this is religion."

Incidentally we have already seen something of the particular forms of Channing's supernaturalistic theology, — its doctrine touching the Scriptures (Baltimore sermon), Christology (controversy of 1815), and Atonement (New York sermon of 1826). It can hardly be denied that Channing's method was, in its intent, more scriptural than that of his orthodox contemporaries. It was

his confidence in the sufficiency of Scripture that made him so averse to "man-made creeds." It was its lack of scriptural confirmation, for one thing, that made the Trinitarian system so impossible for him. It was his reverence for the letter of Scripture that indisposed him for all those allegorical interpretations, without which, said Cardinal Newman, orthodoxy would have no case at all. But his distrust of such interpretations did not import that every superficial meaning was the best. "Let me go to the Bible," he said, "dismissing my reason, and taking the first impression which the words convey, and there is no absurdity, however gross, into which I may not fall." The actual meaning was to be sought in precisely the same manner as that of other books. Here was a fruitful seed; but the soil in which it grew afforded it no proper nourishment. Incidentally, there was much anticipation of the higher criticism of to-day. It was with a forefeeling for Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Dogma" that he wrote, "The language of the Bible is not that of logicians, nor the language of retired and inanimate speculation, but of affection, of zeal, of men who burned to convey deep and vivid impressions of truth." With much appearance of difference and contradiction, how was the essential teaching of the Bible to be found? "Nothing is plainer than that I must compare passage with passage, and limit one by another, and especially limit all by those plain and universal principles of reason which are called

common sense." The vice of this method was, that it imposed common sense on every biblical writer, — a rule of thumb for agonies and exaltations of the spirit, and that, with as little scientific warrant, it assumed the unity of the Bible, arguing from part to part as if it were all the work of one man, the expression of one mind, whereas, it is, in fact, the free and independent expression of a hundred or more different minds, subject to the social influences of a thousand various years and to the special stress of each separate writer's individuality. What his exegesis — the interpretation of the obscure and the inferior by the simplest and the best — actually came to was his transfiguration of the given form in the light of his own extraordinarily un-"common-sense," his personal conviction of what was just and right. So much of the Bible was inspired as appealed to his moral and religious sensibility. The woes denounced upon the Pharisees were swallowed up in the Beatitudes. He read the former so tenderly that an objector said, "If Jesus spoke them in that way, they are all right." But did Jesus speak them in that way? Did he mean, "Alas for you Scribes and Pharisees!"? I doubt it very much. Jesus was not exactly another Channing, writ however large. And Channing's method with the Scriptures was at once an enhancement of their inferior parts and a deduction from their infinite reality, richness, and variety. He went to them too much as one seeing his natural face in a glass.

It should be noted, by the way, that the unity of the Bible was for Channing practically a New Testament unity. Formally he considered "the Christian dispensation a continuation of the Jewish," but his emphasis anticipated the reminder of one of his later sermons that when he speaks of Revelation he means the Christian religion. Here he had something of the narrowness which was much more markedly characteristic of Andrews Norton, whose opinion of the Old Testament was lacking in due respect. Channing was emphatically a man of the New Testament. His texts were drawn from it almost exclusively. Much less his arguments. His appeals to its authority, except in a very large and general way, were few and far between. His sermons were developments of his own broadening thought, not attenuations of Bible texts. These were points of departure, not anchors to be dragged astern, when every sail was bellying with the wind. He theorized very little on the subject of inspiration, but that plenary, not verbal, inspiration was his working hypothesis, there can be no doubt. The Bible, and especially the New Testament, *contained* rather than *was* a revelation. The tendency was to the now familiar strain of liberal orthodoxy, the Bible the natural record of a supernatural revelation; and to that other, the substance of the revelation the personality of Jesus rather than anything he taught: "Christianity is Christ."

In no respect did Channing withstand the ortho-

doxy of his time more sharply, because it ought, according to his judgment, to be blamed, than in the matter of its determination to convert what was most fluid and intangible in the New Testament into the hardest dogmas, to reject which portended moral ruin and eternal hell. And where he deprecated overconfidence, he was not himself at fault. He never dogmatized concerning the nature and rank of Jesus, because the New Testament had for him on these points no sure word of prophecy. What he felt sure of was that it did not declare his deity, nor his double nature, and his rejection of these doctrines[1] was absolute and without shadow of turning. It was different with Christ's preëxistence. He inclined to this till he drew near the end of his life, but with slackening conviction of its certain truth. He recognized that vagueness of the New Testament which presented so many difficulties to those who received the New Testament as a theological unit, which presents so few to those who, from the diversity of its authorship, expect variety of thought. Lately we have had Professor Gilbert confirming the view of Mr. Norton that the New Testament Christ is not a preëxistent being, but there were texts which might well arrest Channing for a time on this line of advance. We have heard a thousand times that he was an Arian in his Christology, but the proverb which declares labels to be libels has here a vivid

[1] He contended that a revelation would not leave such doctrines to doubtful inference and interpretation, if they were true.

illustration. What is certain is that the Socinian doctrine, as presented by Priestley and Belsham, did not attract him, but his Christ was far too human to represent the Arian conception in an exhaustive manner. He was no careful student of patristic theologians. If he had read Newman's "Arians of the Fourth Century," when it appeared in 1838, he would probably have found how little of an Arian he was. For Arianism had far less scope for that human side of Jesus which was so inexpressibly dear to Channing than had the Athanasian doctrine. I find no evidence that he ever entered sympathetically into the merits of the great Arian controversy; that he ever appreciated the fact that Arians and Athanasians were striving by different paths for the same goal — escape from a polytheistic ditheism — and that Athanasius took the better way. But Channing's final escape from Arianism was not by way of Athanasianism, any more than by way of Socinianism. It was by way of a humanitarianism much less mechanical and artificial than that of the Socinian scheme. This last was made impossible for him by the increasing sympathy of his thought with the various Transcendentalism of his later years. We have the testimony of his son, carefully transmitted to Colonel Higginson and Dr. Bellows, that he said (1841), "I am more and more inclined to believe in the simple humanity of Jesus." If he did not openly so preach, it was from no dictation of an esoteric policy, but because he preached nothing of which

he had not assurance doubly sure; also because the main effect of Jesus for his mind — his moral influence — was independent of any theory of his personality.

All this is quite apart from the object of this chapter, to set forth "What Channing preached." He did not *preach* an Arian Christology. Infrequently there was some cold and formal reference to it, but what he warmed to was the example and the inspiration of Christ's moral character. Here was that emphasis by which he must be judged. Long before there was any conscious deliverance from the Arian bonds, the body of his preaching went forth with a glad rush of enthusiasm upon lines that had no congruity with the Arian conception of Christ as a being so nearly of an age with God that Arius would not say, "There *was a time* when he was not," but only "There *was* when he was not;" who was the creator of all worlds, and all men's judge in the last great assize. Take all the published sermons which express his thought and feeling for Jesus of Nazareth, and, with these, all the corresponding matter in the "Memoir," "Note-Book," and elsewhere, and, from end to end, the emphasis is on the moral excellence of Jesus, and on love of that as the only love of him deserving of the name. The sermon called "The Character of Christ" is quite certainly the earliest of those sermons dealing specifically with Jesus. Nowhere else is he exalted with so much rhetorical effusion. It is a far cry from this

separation of him from humanity to that sermon of January 5, 1840, which Dr. Gannett thought "suited to do more harm than good," because "even the character of Christ and the character of God," Dr. Channing thought, "were excellent and glorious rather for what they had in common with other good beings than for any attribute which they alone possessed." Yet even in the earlier sermon it was the character of Christ that was the top and crown of his sublimity. Without abating anything from this exaltation, he preached, some time before its publication in 1832, a sermon on "The Imitableness of Christ's character." He still said of Jesus, "I believe him to be more than a human being; separated by a broad distinction from other men." Yet the difference was not an Arian difference. It was a difference of degree and not of kind. Indeed the difference of man from God also was one of degree. It is in this sermon that we have (in one of many places) that affirmation so dear to Channing's heart, "All minds are of one family . . . of one origin, one nature, kindled from one divine flame. . . . This greatest of all truths lies at the foundation of all religion and all hope. . . . It mingles unperceived with all our worship of God, which uniformly takes for granted that he is a Mind having thought, affection, volition like ourselves. . . . When I feel that all minds form one family, that I have the same nature with Jesus, and that he came to communicate to me his own mind, to bring me into communion

with what was sublimest, purest, happiest in himself, then I can love him as I love no other being, excepting him only who is the Father alike of Christ and of the Christian." All this is as far as possible from the Arian type of thought, to which Christ was a being *sui generis*. The imitableness of such a being could not reasonably be maintained. When Channing invited men to the conviction that they might become "one with Jesus in thought, in feeling, in power, in holiness," — "his sublimest virtues may be yours," — he had joined himself unconsciously to those whose confidence is in the pure humanity of Jesus; he was realizing the logical significance of his "one sublime idea," "the greatness of the soul."

If the two noble sermons on "Love to Christ," do not carry us farther, they reinforce with fresh illustrations the teaching already indicated. As well go, he said, to the genealogy of a saint or hero for a knowledge of his character as to theories of Christ's nature for any real knowledge of him. "Christians have yet to learn that inspiration and miracles and outward dignities are nothing compared with the soul." Love to Christ is love of his character, of "that divine philanthropy which made him the Son of God." In the second of these sermons he contrasts the sufferings of Jesus on the cross with his character as a means of exciting our affection; not his sufferings, but the greatness of the spirit in which he suffered, the one thing above all. The sermon upon Jesus as

"Brother, Friend, and Saviour," in "The Perfect Life," was probably one of the later of those which he devoted to a theme of which he never tired. He refers to the preëxistence of Christ as "a doctrine supported apparently by the letter of various texts," but what delights him is that he came to earth trailing no clouds of a preëxistent glory. "Jesus by his birth was truly a *human being*, and in this we should rejoice." "Thus he was one of us. He was a Man. I see in him a Brother and a Friend. I feel the reality of that large loving *human* sympathy which so gloriously distinguished his whole character and life." There is no taint of Arianism here. He conceives that "his miracles were studiously performed in the most unostentatious way." They must not be permitted to blind men to his real worth, and this consisted in his character. "The great impulse which is to carry forward the human race is the CHARACTER of Jesus, understood ever more clearly, ever more deeply felt." He was the Emancipator of the intellect and conscience; the Liberator of a boundless hope.

It must not be supposed that Channing's views of Jesus and of Christianity were confined to the few sermons dealing with these subjects exclusively. We come upon them, take what road we will. The preacher who fears to repeat himself can go to Channing for an habitual justification of the fault, if such it is. His "one sublime idea" and its glorious companions were constantly reap-

pearing in his sermons, his letters, and his talk. He might set out with one or the other, and soon or late all his great ideas, "like gods, talking all around Olympus," would be about him in full choir. Like all minds, as he conceived them, they were of one family, and they dwelt together in unity. One of the most radiant was "The Character of Jesus," his peculiar glory; another was, "Love of that Character the true Love to Christ;" a third, "The Character of Jesus the heart of Christianity," at once its source and end. Sometimes these seemed to overtop the other great ideas, the dignity of human nature, spiritual freedom, the kinship of all minds, the Fatherhood of God. Again, this order was reversed. The fact is that the idea on which Channing gazed, for the time being, most intently, loomed for him into preëminence. But through the veil of this illusion we glimpse a culminating point.

An important part of Channing's view of Christ and Christianity was his view of the atonement. This doctrine bulked so huge across his path, at that time when he was working through the tangle of the traditional theology, that he tried to make some terms with it, conceding some mysterious efficacy in the death of Jesus as affecting the redemption of mankind from sin to holiness and heaven. But the use of mystery by the orthodox as a postern by which to escape from those who had fairly gained possession of their citadel on the rational side, made resort to it soon distasteful

to Channing, and then quite impossible. Words spoken with the understanding wholly displaced in his affection those spoken in an unknown tongue. He became passionately enamored of "the simplicity of Christ." It was of the essence of a revelation that it should be intelligible. To be so was its final cause. If there were mysterious aspects of Christ's nature or of his death, in so far as they could not be appropriated by the intellect, they were without significance for the conscience and the heart.[1] I do not recall, and have not been able to find in Channing's writings, public or personal, any approximation to the idea that the purpose of the atonement was to reconcile God to man. He habitually reversed this proposition. With equal energy he rejected the doctrine of Christ's "infinite satisfaction;" *par excellence*, in the Baltimore and New York sermons. There was a growing disposition to deprecate the rhetorical exhibition of the sufferings of Jesus, a tendency to find their ultimate significance in their illustration of his self-sacrificing spirit. That "mysterious agency" of the Cross, which he had not willingly let go, he at length repudiated as "our peril,

[1] In Channing's later sermons one finds a lofty satisfaction in the sentiment of mystery. But here was no reversion to the orthodox infusion of an element of mystery into difficulties which it could not resolve, though in the main they were of its own creation. Channing's adorable mystery was that "mystery behind every act and appearance" into which all special mysteries are merged in the progressive experience of mankind. *Cf.* Herbert Spencer's *Study of Sociology*, p. 310.

which may become our ruin." "I cannot receive from the Cross of Christ any good so great as that sublime spirit of self-sacrifice, of love to God, and of unbounded charity, which the Cross so gloriously manifested." His later preaching of "Christ and him crucified" was with fond reiteration, but wholly of this kind. Here was a "moral view of the atonement" which had much in common with Bushnell's first volume on this subject, little with his second. Bushnell's method was subtle (not merely subtile) to a degree to which Channing's bald simplicity made no approximation, so that even in his first volume the subject is considered much more curiously than at any time by Channing. It was in the second volume that Bushnell expounded his idea of God's passibility.[1] To Channing the idea of a suffering God was a monstrosity. As logically implied in the doctrine of "Christ's infinite atonement," it was that doctrine's grand defect. Its pantheistic character did not commend it to him, seeing that his Christian deism was utterly averse to pantheism. But it is strange that those of our own time who rationalize the vicarious suffering of Jesus, as a symbol of that vicarious suffering in which the world abounds from the ascidian to the saint, can find in Channing no anticipation of their thought. It is, perhaps, as well that they cannot, seeing that the original doctrine intended no such symbol, was not feeling after any such, and is not entitled to be regarded

[1] See Munger's *Horace Bushnell*, pp. 235–273.

as productive of a pathetic truth with which it had no genetic relation whatsoever.[1]

There is something arbitrary in my attempt to separate Channing's larger and more personal opinions from those which he held more or less in common with the liberal supernaturalists of his time, because we do not find the latter in disjunction with the former, but associated with them on the most intimate terms, construed in sympathy with them, and taking up into their structure much of the substance of the more characteristic thought.[2] But there are aspects of his thought

[1] The symbolism of the traditional dogmas is much overworked. Symbols should not be denials or destructive limitations of the truths they symbolize. "One in three" is no kind of a symbol of the One in all; it is a denial of the One in all. So "God incarnate in Christ" is a denial of God incarnate in humanity, and "Revelation" is a denial of universal inspiration. Carefully considered, the old forms, Original Sin, Election, Total Depravity, are found to be entirely lacking in any symbolical intimation of the new doctrines of Heredity, Environment, and so on. Moreover, the perpetuated symbol is a perpetual menace to the larger thought it is supposed to shadow forth. See Harnack, *What is Christianity?* p. 188: "How often and often in the history of religion has there been a tendency to do away with some traditional form of doctrine or ritual which has ceased to satisfy inwardly, but to do away with it by giving it a new interpretation. The endeavor seems to be succeeding; the temper and the knowledge prevailing at the moment are favorable to it — when, lo and behold! the old meaning suddenly comes back again. The actual words of the ritual, of the liturgy, of the official doctrine, prove stronger than anything else."

[2] For an anthology of this which is wonderfully rich and full, see W. C. Gannett's and Judson Fisher's *Selected Passages*, published by the Western Unitarian Conference. I could wish that it might be read in connection with this chapter. At almost every point I have found it anticipating my own selections. But though

concerning religion, human nature, intellectual liberty, a future life, the Fatherhood of God, which have not come fairly into view in my exposition heretofore. I now turn to these, reserving for the two chapters following an account of his thought and action on social and reformatory lines.

In the most central things "the voice obeyed at eve" was for him, as for Emerson, the voice "obeyed at prime," while incidentally there were survivals in his earlier of his earliest thought, and, to the end, surprising incongruities, trivial conceptions neighboring with the most elevated, as where the Old Testament theophanies as little troubled him as they did George Herbert when he sang: —

> One might have sought and found Thee presently
> At some fair oak, or bush, or cave, or well:
> "Is my God this way?" "No," they would reply,
> "He is to Sinai gone, as we heard tell."

In the earlier sermons the idea of a heavenly reward for this world's righteousness lagged superfluous on the stage, which was already being crowded with a company of larger mould. As early as 1805, we find him saying, "True religion is not to be measured by subservience to a farther end; but it is *the end of ends* in itself. . . . Religion is the rectification of the soul; it is inward health. . . .

Channing shows much better in passages than in sentences, even the passages are much more impressive in their proper setting than taken disconnectedly, or classified in the manner of the Gannett-Judson anthology.

It consists of feelings and dispositions which include everything generous, disinterested, sympathetic, and pure." Very soon we have, in one form or another, religion identified with moral idealism seeking its image and its inspiration in a divine personality. "What is there that gives such dignity to our nature as the capacity for knowing and loving the best of beings?" Already in 1816 we find the thought which reached its climax in the sermon "Likeness to God," which was preached at Dr. Farley's ordination in 1828, and was then denounced as "blasphemy" by the orthodox party, — by a part of it, to speak more exactly. With Channing, no more than with Parker, was piety something quite apart from morality, something exclusively concerned with God. Indeed Channing's resolution of piety into morality was more absolute than Parker's. "Religion," he said, "is a high degree of delight in all the perfections of God, — in his wisdom, his rectitude, his benevolence; and what is the most acceptable expression of this veneration?" He answered that it was imitation of the perfections of God, his justice, his benevolence.

Benevolence and righteousness are the attributes on which *Piety* chiefly rests as its object and by communion with which it acts and grows. But are they not the very qualities which we mean by *Morality?* What is morality but the exercise of a benevolent and just temper towards all beings within our knowledge and influence? If so, what is God's character but Perfect

Morality? — what but the very dispositions, in their fulness, which conscience enjoins upon every man, and which form what we call rectitude. To love God, then, is to love morality in its most perfect form; and thus we see how religion and morality pass into each other and become one. The love of God is but another name for the love of essential benevolence and justice. . . . Religion is the perfection of morality.[1]

So far was Channing from regarding religion as an exotic supernaturally planted in the soul that he regarded it as the soul's most natural and characteristic trait.

What is religion? not a foreign inhabitant, not something alien to our nature, which comes and takes up its abode in the soul. It is the soul itself, lifting itself up to its Maker. What is virtue? It is the soul listening to, and revering, and obeying a law which belongs to its very essence — the law of duty . . . We hear men decrying human nature, and in the same breath exalting religion: as if religion were anything but human nature acting in obedience to its chief law! Religion and virtue, so far as we possess them, are ourselves; and the homage which is paid to these attributes is in truth a tribute to the soul of man.

One of the most interesting and important aspects of Channing's conception of religion is his insistence that "it is not an exclusive principle." He knew nothing of religion as a "faculty," being in this respect a step in advance of Theodore Par-

[1] It is not a far cry from these constructions to that of W. C. Gannett, familiar to many Unitarians, "Morality thought out is religious thought, felt out is religious feeling, lived out is religious life."

ker. "The Religious Principle in Human Nature is the desire to establish relations with a Being more perfect than itself." As such, "it is not an exclusive impulse. It does not grow from an emotion that is centred wholly upon God and seeks no other object. . . . All the great principles of human nature are germs of religion, impulses towards God." Seeking for anything better of any kind, men are feeling after God if haply they may find him. The intellect, the heart, the love of beauty, seeking their appropriate ends, are seeking God, and have no rest till they find rest in him. The first sermon in "The Perfect Life" emphasizes this doctrine; the second gives us Channing's doctrine of the larger revelation. "He who studies nothing but the Bible does not study even that book aright. Rightly read, it would send him back to every creature that God hath made and to every event wherein God is acting." Such was the supremacy of ethics in Channing's mind that it endured no brother near the throne, and the cosmic part of his theology is comparatively small. It has unusual prominence in this sermon. Here grows the flower which has been so often plucked from Tennyson's crannied wall: —

> Behold the humblest wild flower. To produce that weed all nature has conspired. Into itself it receives the influence of all the elements — light, heat, and air. Sun, earth, and ocean meet to pay it tribute. The least thing in nature acts upon all things and is acted on by all; so that each implies and is represented in all. In a word,

to understand the simplest work of God, the universe must be comprehended.

It is in this same sermon that the great mystery of life appeals to him, a mystery so much vaster and better than that which men, dog-like, had hidden away in irrational dogmas and then unburied with frantic simulation of an astonishing discovery.

Look at a grain of wheat! That seed is the fruit of all harvests, of all ages, since the creation of the world. It carries us back to the hour when the morning stars sang for joy over the new-born earth. In it are centred the combined forces of suns and rains, of soils and climates, for a period of which history has no record. And again this tiny seed has within it prolific energy to cover whole kingdoms, and it may be the whole globe. Such mysteries open a deeper mystery still, — Life, that awful power, so endlessly various in the forms it assumes, — Life that fills earth, air, and sea, with motion, growth, activity, and joy! . . . What sight can discern, what thought explore its mystery?

From "the infinite veiled in the lowliest creations," he turns to the immensity which it informs and overfills. "An infinite universe is each moment opened to our view. What blessedness it is to dwell amidst this transparent air, which the eye can pierce without limit, amidst these floods of pure, soft, cheering light, under this immeasurable arch of heaven, and in sight of these countless stars!" But there is a revelation of more penetrative force. It is that of the Principle of Right re-

vealed in every human soul. Here Channing's moral idealism took a daring flight, so daring that Dr. Gannett, listening to his senior colleague's sermon, again made grave demur, writing in his journal, "I did not like the sermon. It seemed to be based on the unsound philosophy that morality is, in theory at least, superior to the divine will, instead of being, as it is, nothing but an expression of this will." What Channing said was, "Do you not recognize that a law of right is promulgated within you, to which *all* men are subject? Still more, do you not feel that this great law of right binds not only men, but all intelligent beings; that it is the law, not of the earth only, but of the universe?"[1]

From Channing's more general religious principles, I pass to those views of human nature which have been very properly regarded as being more significant than any other parts of his preaching. In generous appreciation of these views, liberal orthodoxy has of late outdone the Unitarians, to whom these are, perhaps too much, the unregarded air by which they live. Everything else in Channing's thought and work was inference from, and application of, these views. They constituted his impassioned faith in man's intellectual being, and his jealousy for its dignities and rights. They were fundamental to his interest in every great reform: it was because of man's exalted nature that he

[1] This sermon does not seem to have the ending which Dr. Gannett praised, but the thought which he deprecated was precisely that indicated.

must not be enslaved; must not be licentious or intemperate; must not be crushed by legal penalties; must be educated to all noble use and aim. They were equally fundamental to his conceptions of the infinite Father, whose nature differed in degree only intellectually and morally from that of man. That "humanity of God," for which many Christian agnostics have had recourse to Jesus, Channing found in God the Father, in virtue of his simple Fatherhood. There was a correlation of energy among all of Channing's leading thoughts, an easy transformation of them each into the other, but it was into the dignity of human nature, the greatness of the soul, that they were all most easily resolved. Here was no "exiguous homogeneity," — nevertheless, homogeneity. If we go to Channing for variety of thought, we shall come away sorrowful in proportion to the greatness of our expectations. But in its homogeneity, its absorbent unity, there was the simplicity and the intensiveness of the man who does one thing; or, if many things, all in one spirit.

The pervasiveness of Channing's one "sublime idea" prepares us to be disappointed when we inquire for the particular sermons in which it finds distinct and separate expression. Such are hard to find. One, "Honor all Men," raises our hopes, but proves, though very noble, to be less significant for our immediate purpose than some others, whose direct concern is with a less promising subject. In his more controversial writings, the dignity of

human nature shines in contrast with the doctrines of total depravity and man's fallen nature. There are concessions to the latter in the earlier preaching, but they are not fatal to man's greatness. In his fallen state, he is not

> Less than archangel ruin'd and th' excess
> Of glory obscured.

It is his character and not his nature that is bad. Channing's dignity of human nature did not blind him to the defects of human character, though he took more delight in dwelling on its nobilities. But no defect of character worked corruption of nature to his understanding. On the contrary, he found humanity "magnificent in sin" (not his phrase, I need hardly say, but Browning's), proofs of its grandeur in the heights from which it falls, the daring of its disobedience, the energy of its self-recovery.

Its most classical form was given to his pervasive thought in one of the letters of his later life. There has been, he says, more unity in his preaching than in that of some other Liberal Christians, "in consequence of the strong hold which one sublime idea has taken on [his] mind. This is the greatness of the soul, its divinity, its union with God, its unity with God, — not by passive dependence, but by spiritual likeness, — its receptiveness of his spirit, its self-forming power, its destination to ineffable glory, its immortality. . . . To awaken men to what is within them, to help them to understand the infinite treasure of their own

souls, such seems to me the object which is to be ever kept in sight. This is an entirely different thing from filling their heads with vague notions about human dignity. What we want is to awaken in them a consciousness of their own nature and of the intimate relation it establishes between them and God, and to rouse their whole energy to the work of their own redemption and perfection." In his lecture on Self-Culture, and in the lectures on "The Elevation of the Laboring Classes," and in the sermons "Likeness to God" and "The Imitableness of Christ's Character," the long mountain range of Channing's most engrossing thought is lifted into some of its higher peaks and domes, — to the highest, possibly, in the second of the sermons in "The Perfect Life."

> I do and I must reverence human nature. . . . I know its history. I shut my eyes to none of its weaknesses and crimes. . . . But the signatures of its origin and its end are impressed too deeply to be ever wholly effaced. I bless it for its kind affections, for its strong and tender love. I honor it for its struggles against oppression, for its growth and progress under the weight of so many chains and prejudices, for its achievements in science and art, and still more for its examples of heroic and saintly virtue. These are marks of a divine origin, and the pledges of a celestial inheritance. ("Likeness to God.")

There was not, perhaps, entire coherency in the terms of his appreciation of humanity. Sometimes the intellectual, sometimes the moral aspect took

on the most entrancing light. But then it must be remembered that the "reason" of his lofty and perpetual praise was conceived by him as "moral reason," and that he used the word "mind" inclusively. It was for him as big a word as soul, implying more than that, — at once the intellectual and the moral elements. A careless person might easily imagine Channing given over unduly to "mind-worship," but a little attention to his use of terms should correct the misapprehension. The following passages illustrate the predominance of the ethical note, even where the intellectual sounds clear and strong.

The greatness of the soul is especially seen in the intellectual energy which discerns absolute, universal truth, in the idea of God, in freedom of will and moral power, in disinterestedness and self-sacrifice, in the boundlessness of love, in aspirations after affection, in desires and affections, which time and space cannot confine, and the world cannot fill. The soul, viewed in these lights, should fill us with awe. It is an immortal germ which may be said to contain now within itself what endless ages are to unfold. It is truly an image of the infinity of God. ("Introductory Remarks" to six-volume edition.)

Am I asked for my conception of the dignity of a human being? I should say that it consists, first, in that spiritual principle called sometimes the reason, sometimes the conscience, which, rising above what is local and temporary, discerns immutable truth and everlasting right; which, in the midst of imperfect things, conceives of perfection; which is universal and

impartial, standing in direct opposition to the partial, selfish principles of human nature; which says to me with authority that my neighbor is as precious as myself, and his rights as sacred as my own; which commands me to receive all truth, however it may war with my pride, and to do all justice, however it may conflict with my interest; and which calls me to rejoice with love in all that is beautiful, good, holy, happy, in whatever being these attributes may be found. This principle is a ray of divinity in man. ("Elevation of the Laboring Classes.")

In "Honor Due to All Men" we read: "The sense of duty is the greatest gift of God. The Idea of Right is the primary and highest revelation of God to the human mind, and all outward revelations are founded on and addressed to it. All mysteries of science and theology fade away before the simple perception of duty which dawns on the mind of the little child." It was such passages as this that made Emerson bless Channing as one of those who had said his good things before him. There were intimations of his "Over-Soul" in that "law for God also" which Dr. Gannett thought a spot on Channing's sun. Exactly in his line, moreover, were Channing's recurrences to his beloved thought of the oneness of all minds. His doctrine of the greatness of the soul reached to its culmination in this thought.

Here, then, we learn the greatness of human nature. This moral principle — the supreme law in man — is the law of the universe — the very law to which the high-

est beings are subject, and in obeying which they find their elevation and their joy. Thus man and the highest beings are essentially of one order. They form one family. The same spirit of goodness enlivens all. To all there is the same supreme law, the same supreme good. Imagination and genius, in their most inspired moments, can picture nothing in heaven brighter than moral goodness — that very goodness which unfolds in the humblest human heart. This goodness is seen by us intuitively to be confined to no place, to no time, to be the growth of no nation and no world, but to be universal, eternal, immutable, absolute, and worthy of highest veneration and love by all spirits, forever. Can we, then, look on the human soul, which is at once the oracle and the subject of this universal and eternal law, as created only for time and this narrow earth?

Here is the argument for immortality on which Channing most relied when he had come into completest self-possession. He believed very simply in the resurrection of Jesus, and in his earlier preaching (that of the Dudleian Lecture, for example) he based all certainty of immortality on that. I am not aware that in set terms he ever put this view aside. But gradually the emphasis on it faded out, while with equal step the emphasis upon the natural argument for immortality increased. He took no pleasure, as did many others, in minimizing the natural intimations of a future life. He delighted in all these, and, as he dwelt on them, they became more and more persuasive to his mind, until practically his faith in immortality was based on these and not on the New Testament's climacteric miracle.

We have all felt, when looking above us into the atmosphere, that there was an infinity of space which we could not explore. When I look into man's spirit and see there the germs of an immortal life, I feel more deeply that an infinity lies hid beyond what I see. In the idea of Duty, which springs up in every human heart, I discern a Law more sacred and boundless than gravitation, which binds the soul to a more glorious universe than that to which attraction binds the body, and which is to endure though the laws of physical nature pass away. Every moral sentiment, every intellectual action, is to me a hint, a prophetic sign, of a spiritual power to be expanded forever. ("Ministry for the Poor.")

The voice of our whole nature, indeed, properly interpreted, is a cry after higher existence. The restless activity of life is but a pressing forward towards a fulness of good not to be found on earth. ("Perfect Life," sermon ii.)

Such was Channing's relish for activity, intellectual and moral, that the rest which remains for the people of God had for him slight attraction. He desired a heaven in which to work as his miserable body had not permitted him to do on earth. "I think of heaven," he said, "as a world of stupendous plans and efforts for its own improvement. I think of it as a society passing through successive stages of development, virtue, knowledge, power, by the energy of its own members." In such a heaven, "one angel's history may be a volume of more various truth than all the records of our race." He had more homely and more comfortable

thoughts. Pure spirit was not to his mind. He could not endure "the thought of being separated from this harmonious and glorious universe." He expected death "to multiply his connections with it." "An increasing variety of exquisite *sensations*" was certainly a strange demand from one so hyperspiritual as Channing. It is a note that we could ill afford to spare. It reflects his exquisite sensibility, — so exquisite that "a glance at a natural landscape, or even the sight of a beautiful flower" in moments of great bodily weakness "gave [him] a bodily pain from which he shrank."

The most frequent and persistent objection to Channing from the orthodox standpoint has been that he did not sufficiently appreciate the exceeding sinfulness of sin, — did not make enough of sin in his doctrines of human nature and spiritual development.[1] He did not, we are told, habitually trace back the diversified forms of selfish and unrighteous action "to the *fons et origo malorum* — the mysterious alienation of men from the fellowship of God." For Channing the alienation was not mysterious; nay, more, it did not exist: "If I make my bed in hell, thou art there." There was no escape from the upholding of the everlasting arms. Of any background of sin in human nature Channing was certainly not aware, once he had come into entire possession of the liberal ground. But of sin in the concrete, and of its

[1] See Professor Fisher's *History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 421–432, and particularly p. 429.

sinfulness, those must be hard to satisfy who do not find enough in Channing's representation of society and the individual. There is, too, in this an adequate account of those sinful dispositions, from "whence come wars and fightings" and concrete sins of all kinds. So far was his conception of human nature from lessening the dreadfulness of sin for him, that it gave him a ground of color from which this dreadfulness stood out as clear as winter stars from the deep blue-black sky. "Great sin implies a great capacity; it is the abuse of a noble nature. . . . The malignity of sin can only be understood and felt when sin is viewed as the ruin of God's noblest work." Orthodoxy represented sin as infinite because it was sinned *against* an infinite being. Here, Channing thought, was a mere verbal catch. It was as the sin of "such an infinite, eternal being as is the human soul" (*sic* Coleridge) that it was terrible to Channing's mind. "He alone can speak of sin as an infinite evil, and concentrate against it the whole energy of the soul's aversion and dread, who has faith in the unlimited capacities of our spiritual nature and who knows that by love man has affinity with God."

A mechanical search for Channing's doctrine of sin would take one first of all to his sermon, "The Evil of Sin." But this is one of the most formal and uninspired of all Channing's discourses, one of a kind which many others could preach as well as he, or better. It is interesting, however, as

containing Channing's most definite dissent from the Universalism of his time, as by him understood. Channing's aloofness cost him a good deal. It was somewhat with Ballou as it was with Garrison: Channing had not that personal knowledge of either that could qualify him for a just understanding. Either's personality would have set the doctrine of either in an attractive light. But as Channing drew nearer and nearer to Garrison, so he drew nearer and nearer to Ballou. He could not conceive of the mere accident of death as making any appreciable difference in a man's character. It could set no limit either way. There would be the possibility of further lapse; also that of infinite advance. And all, at last, would set their feet upon the upward climb. The fires of the orthodox hell burned out for him before he had proceeded far. "Infinite, endless punishment," he said, "would make hell the most interesting spot in the universe. All the sympathies of heaven would be turned towards it." He denounced the idea of such punishment as blasphemy; but —

> There is something far worse than outward punishment. It is sin; it is the state of a soul which has revolted from God, which renounces its Father, and hardens itself against Infinite Love; which, endued with divine powers, enthralls itself to animal lusts; which makes gain its God; . . . which, living under God's eye, dreads man's frown or scorn, and prefers human praise to its own calm consciousness of virtue; which tamely yields to temptation, shrinks with a cow-

ard's baseness from the perils of duty, and sacrifices its glory and peace in parting with self-control. No ruin can be compared to this.

Such is the involution of Channing's leading thoughts that, coming to his thought of God, I find that who will has already heard my story told in good part. When our Liverpool preacher, Richard A. Armstrong, made a little book, "Man's Knowledge of God," and sent copies of it to Cardinal Newman and the cardinal's ultra-heretical brother, Francis, the same post brought him answers of warm approval from them both. Channing's theology, in general, was less unlike the cardinal's than was his brother's, but, like his, it agreed with the cardinal's in finding conscience to be man's open door to God: "We learn the divinity through a divine principle within ourselves . . . by giving up all to virtue, and in no other way. . . . Whenever we think, speak, or act with moral energy and resolute devotion to duty, be the occasion ever so humble, obscure, familiar, then the divinity is growing within us." But while the idea of God rises preëminently in conscience, it is to conscience as its vital air. "Religion gives infinite worth to conscience. From it I learn that my idea of right is not an individual, private, personal conviction, but that it is derived from the Universal Parent; that it is his inspiration; that it is not a lonely voice in my soul, but the word of the Infinite Will."

Channing's persuasion of the divine reality an-

ticipated the Transcendentalists in its reliance upon inward strength. In the later years, the cosmic wonder grew upon his mind; in the earlier it was the drowsy echo of that natural theology which Paley and his kind had taken over from the Deists whom they so heartily despised. It is no echo that we hear in the sermon, "God revealed in the Universe and in Humanity," in "The Perfect Life," but the sincere cry of a strong man looking out upon the world through his own eyes. But from within outward was the habitual procession of his thought: "The idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, is the idea of our own spiritual natures purified and enlarged to infinity." If Channing has a thought to which he recurs more frequently than this, it is that of the eternal Fatherhood. In his earlier preaching, this is presented as one of the great assets of supernatural Christianity, a conclusion not to be reached by any path less steep than that. But the emphasis upon this view soon began to slacken, then the view dropped out of the enlarging thought, until at length we have the Fatherhood of God firmly based on the soul's normal experience. There was more exigency than softness in the doctrine as Channing entertained it in the plenitude of his power. He expressly disclaimed the indulgent human parent as the form on which the idea of the Divine Parent should be shaped. Even when preaching on "The Father's Love for Persons," that love is represented as his inflexible demand for moral excel-

lence, without which there can be no joyous consciousness of filial relationship with him. The supreme satisfaction which Channing found himself and pressed on others, in the Divine Paternity, was that unity of mind — "all minds of one family"— to which we have already attended on its manward side. Channing had his doctrine of divine immanence as well as Parker, though with less reiteration, and with scanty recognition on the physical side. His was the thought for which the words would come in time, "Our Father who art within."

> He pervades, he penetrates our souls. . . . We do not discern him because he is too near, too inward, too deep to be recognized by our present imperfect consciousness. And he is thus near, not only to discern, but to act, to influence, to give his spirit, to communicate to us divinity. This is the great paternal gift of God . . . his disinterested, impartial, universal goodness, which diffuses beauty, life, and happiness. . . . This influence of God, exerted on the soul to conform it to himself, to make it worthy of its divine parentage, this it is which most clearly manifests what is meant by God being our Father.

When Channing says, "There is but one ground for virtuous affection in the universe, but one object of cherished and enduring love in heaven or on earth, and that is Moral Goodness," he not only says that which he repeats oftener than anything else, but that which takes up and co-ordinates all his other thoughts to a preëminent

degree. What is more and better, we feel, we are obliged to feel, that he is speaking with an absolute sincerity, that a passion for moral goodness was the consuming passion of his life, and that what he aspired to be, he was. As we go along with him, we sometimes seem to thread a labyrinth and to come back over and over again to the same point, not without weariness. But the last effect is of emergence on some crowning height, from which we look abroad upon a landscape bathed in golden air, and feel upon our faces the freshening of a mighty wind which blows forever through the universe of souls, — the spirit of good whereby God lives, and we live also, now and forevermore in him and with him.

CHAPTER IX

BETWEEN TWO FIRES

CHANNING was born in a slaveholding State, and in a town known for some time after his birth as "the slave market of America." The gradual manumission of slaves in Rhode Island was not quite complete at the time of Channing's death. His immediate family had barely freed itself from the common taint of the community, in his early years. During the later he was charged with "living in luxury at the price of blood," the allusion being to Mr. Gibbs, his wife's father, who had owned a distillery and had sometimes exchanged its product with the slave dealers for their slaves.[1] These things make it appear strange that Channing encountered slavery in Virginia as a fresh experience. The field hand was a different slave from the domestic servant of his Newport acquaintance, but the slave traffic should, it would seem, have impressed his youthful imagination more painfully than it did. The main effect of his earliest contact with slavery was, I think, to breed in him that conviction of the possible goodness of individuals, enmeshed in an abominable

[1] See his letter to Miss Peabody in her *Reminiscences*, pp. 360–363.

system, which runs through all his antislavery writings, as a criticism upon the sterner Abolitionist construction. He had known those whom he must remember as good men and women in despite of their slave-owning and the fact that some of them had looked to slavery as a source of gain, a circumstance of peculiar horror in his eyes.

It is another strangeness that his impressions of slavery in Virginia, so acute and painful, gave no obviously continuous character to his antislavery thought. I do not, for example, find any evidence that the adoption of the Missouri Compromise, in 1820, excited in him any noble rage, though I have made diligent search. The argument from the silence of history is easily fallacious, but it is certainly strange that a commotion which shook the country to its centre left no trace upon the sermons, letters, journals, of which we have so great an abundance. Surely, that "Doric Hall meeting," of which Webster was the conspicuous light, and in which James T. Austin[1] played a leading part, must have warmed his blood with its protesting resolutions; or was he at that time too deeply immersed in the consciousness of his physical wretchedness to think of anything else? Never at any time was his interest in English social and political reforms much less than in

[1] Of whom we shall see more hereafter as attorney-general of Massachusetts, prosecuting Abner Kneeland and defending the murder of Lovejoy, in either event confronting Channing as a principal opponent.

our own, and our first sign of his awakening consciousness of our miserable condition is a letter to an English correspondent in 1828. He did not then appreciate the relative evil of our system: he was always slow to entertain opinions sharply traversing his good opinion of mankind. But the most characteristic note of his opposition to slavery appears in this early letter: "Even where slavery provides sufficiently for the physical being, it destroys the intellectual and moral being, and utterly extinguishes the hope and capacity of progress." Here, as everywhere, the dignity of human nature, the greatness of the soul, was central to Channing's interest in practical reform.

But he was now to have another opportunity to see slavery close at hand. The quest for health, always fruitless, but ever hopefully renewed, took him in the fall of 1830 to St. Croix, in the West Indies, thirty years later the first stage of Parker's final pilgrimage. "Here was a volume on slavery opened always before my eyes, and how could I help learning some of its lessons?" How carefully he studied them his letters of the time bear witness, and various writings after his return. With characteristic but unfortunate judgment he omitted from subsequent editions of his "Slavery" a note which constituted the value of the first edition, as did not the "principles from which he was unwilling to divert his readers' attention to details." The details were those of the slave's subjection to the master's cruelty and licentiousness. Return-

ing to Boston after a six-months' course in this study, he at once made his experience the subject of a sermon to the Federal Street society. He had found the old severity of discipline relaxed. "Still," he said, "I think no power of conception can do justice to the evils of slavery. They are chiefly moral; they act on the mind, and, through the mind, bring intense suffering on the body. As far as the human soul can be destroyed, slavery is that destroyer." From that discourse, which demanded the same reprobation for American as for West Indian slavery, dated the beginning of a period throughout which the love of Channing's people for him waxed cold. Or was the beginning further back, in those assaults upon the love of gain which he continually renewed, finding in that love the main strength of slavery, and as much a Northern as a Southern fault? What is certain is that Channing's impressive generalizations were more congenial to his people than his particular applications, and that, as these became more prominent, many were irritated by his exalted reputation, which made it difficult to dispense with his services in any summary manner.

Something had happened during Channing's stay in St. Croix that might well make his people hypersensitive to his criticism of slavery. In January, 1831, Garrison had flung the banner of the "Liberator" to the wind, bearing a motto which has not been bettered in the annals of reform. The first numbers had been printed from "Examiner"

type, Garrison and his assistant paying for the use of the type by work on the "Examiner." Channing at once became a subscriber[1] and a diligent reader, with strong attraction to its essential spirit, with serious doubts as to its manner of presenting its ideas and its aims. Garrison's demolition of the colonization fallacy found in him ready sympathy, and he could accept "immediate emancipation" as meaning "the earliest practicable;" but Garrison and his coadjutors dealt with the slaveholders as a mass, when to him they were individuals of the most various degrees of immorality. It happened, consequently, that for ten years Channing found himself between two fires, never pleasing the conservative part of the community and of his own society; seldom satisfying the Abolitionists with the extent of his adhesion to their side; in proportion as he pleased them grieving the conservative party; denounced by this party as an Abolitionist, while simultaneously regarded by the Abolitionists as an open enemy. For the most part these had kindlier feeling for him than had their extreme opponents. They rejoiced in his concessions while resenting his criticisms. To the conservatives, meantime, he was more anathema than Garrison. As one of their own set, he was expected to abide by their traditions. He was little better than a traitor in their eyes.

[1] "One of the first," says Miss Peabody, but one can never feel sure of her facts. In one short paragraph (p. 360) I have found four mistakes, three of them gross.

It is unhappily true that the first effect of Abolitionism upon Channing was to defer his individual action. While still in the West Indies he planned and began to write his elaborate essay, "Slavery," which after his return was put aside and not taken up again for several years. He could plead arrest of judgment on account of ill health and self-distrust, but unwillingness to be confounded with the Abolitionists or to criticise them publicly was probably the factor that was most deterrent. The harshest judgment of his general course is that of Mrs. Chapman [1] in her appendix to the autobiography of Harriet Martineau. It is a railing accusation that is forced on our attention by the nobility of its personal source.

Dr. Channing, between whom and Harriet Martineau a true friendship subsisted to the day of his death, was a good man, but not in any sense a great one. . . . He had neither insight, courage, nor firmness. In his own church had sprung up a vigorous opposition to slavery, which he innocently, in so far as ignorantly, used the little power he had to stay. He was touched by Brougham's eloquent denial of the right of property in man, and he adopted the idea as a theme; but he dreaded any one who claimed, on behalf of the slaves,

[1] Maria Weston Chapman. "Her services to Mr. Garrison," say the Garrison sons, "were inestimable, her coöperation with him perfect, and on her more than on any other woman the conduct of the cause rested." She joined the Abolitionists in 1834 against the advice of her pastor, Dr. Channing, and soon became the soul of the Women's Antislavery Society. After 1840 her energy sustained the *Antislavery Standard*, and through that the Antislavery Society, with unequalled ardor and efficiency.

that their masters should instantly renounce that right of ownership; he was terror-stricken at the idea of calling on the whole American people to take counsel on so difficult and delicate a matter in antislavery associations; and above all he deprecated the admission of the colored race to our ranks. He had been selected by a set of money-making men as their representative for piety, as Edward Everett was their representative gentleman and scholar, Judge Story their representative jurist and companion in social life, and Daniel Webster their representative statesman and advocate looking after their interests in Congress.

Depreciation could not further go. Such "a good man" would be good for nothing. We have here Mrs. Chapman's superb devotion to Garrison expressed in terms of immitigable contempt for the man who had refused his personal sympathy to Garrison in his sorest need. Garrison's own resentment softened with the lapse of time, and in 1848 and again in 1880 he brought to Channing's memory a generous appreciation. But Mrs. Chapman, who might have forgiven any personal affront, could not forgive the slight which had been put upon her noble friend, and, long brooding on it, brought a monstrous thing to birth. Harriet Martineau's conception of Dr. Channing was very different. Writing when his antislavery work was not half done, and when every year was bringing him into closer sympathy with the Abolitionists, she said ("Retrospect of Western Travel," pp. 121, 127): "No one out of the United States can have an idea of Dr. Channing's merit in taking the part

he has adopted on this subject. . . . He has shown what his moral courage is by proofs which will long outlast his indications of slowness in admitting the full merits of the Abolitionists. Here his caution led him into the rashness of giving sanction to charges and prejudices against them, the grounds of which he had the means of investigating. This is all over now, however; and it was always a trifle in comparison with the great service he was at the same time rendering a cause which the Abolitionists cared for far more than for what the whole world thought of their characters. He is now completely identified with them in the view of all who regard them as in the vanguard in the field of human liberties." The concluding statement here was premature, and, perhaps, never quite exactly true. The identification was never, I think, complete from Channing's point of view, and it certainly never was from Garrison's. And some may be inclined to question Miss Martineau's judgment, as that of one of those "carpet-baggers" who were denounced by the "Daily Advertiser" of those days, though she was for several weeks in Dr. Channing's family and was admitted to his inmost mind. But there were American Abolitionists of unimpeachable authority, who loved and admired Garrison as much as any could, whose opinion of Channing differed from Mrs. Chapman's by the whole heaven's width. Lydia Maria Child, whose best portrait is that sketched by Lowell in the "Fable for Critics," was one of these; Samuel

J. May, the mildest-mannered man that ever attempted a slave rescue, was another. In 1833 Mrs. Child published her "Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans called Africans," the most important of the first Abolitionist publications after Garrison's "Thoughts on Colonization" of the previous year.[1] She sent a copy to Dr. Channing, and in a few days he came to see her. His long walk from Mt. Vernon Street to Cottage Place had taxed his strength severely, but he was still good for nearly three hours' talk. He expressed great satisfaction in the "Appeal," and urged Mrs. Child never to desert the cause, let come what would. (She was faithful to that little needed admonition, sacrificing her literary reputation, as Whittier his political opportunity, on the altar of humanity to man.) In some respects he thought she went too far. "He then entertained the idea, which he afterward discarded, that slavery existed [in the South] in a milder form than elsewhere."[2] The little woman stood out valiantly for her opinion, and Dr. Channing did his best to

[1] Whittier's *Justice and Expediency* (1833) came next in time and in degree. The year 1833 was fertile in productions that sprang from Garrison's prolific seed. Mrs. Child speaks of her *Appeal* as "the first book of such a character," but this only means that Garrison's "word of God" was not bound. It was an octavo pamphlet of 240 pages.

[2] In 1839, Theodore D. Weld's *American Slavery as it is*, with its "Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses," was exceedingly convincing on this point. James Freeman Clarke's six years in Kentucky (1833–39) cured him effectually of Channing's early view, and the Kentucky form of slavery was not the worst.

moderate her "with those calm, wise words which none spoke so well as he." I can imagine how her beautiful dark eyes, which I remember so well in their last unfailing brilliancy, must have flashed as she withstood the doctor to the face.

We afterwards had many interviews. He often sent for me, when I was in Boston, and always urged me to come and tell him of every new aspect of the antislavery cause. At every interview I could see that he grew bolder and stronger on the subject, while I felt that I grew wiser and more just. At first I thought him timid, and even slightly time-serving; but I soon discovered that I formed this estimate from ignorance of his character. I learned that it was justice to *all*, not popularity for *himself*, which made him so cautious. He constantly grew upon my respect, until I came to regard him as the wisest, as well as the gentlest, apostle of humanity. . . . He never sought to undervalue the importance of antislavery, but he said many things to prevent my looking upon it as the *only* question interesting to humanity. . . . His interest in the subject constantly increased, and I never met him without being struck with the progress he had made in overcoming some difficulty, which for the time troubled his sensitive conscience. I can now distinctly recollect several such steps.

Soon after Dr. Channing's return from the West Indies, Mr. May discovered his interest in the Abolitionists. Whenever they met, Dr. Channing was eager with his inquiries about them, and he frequently invited Mr. May to his house for the express purpose of talking over their affairs with him. The most memorable of these visits was late

in the fall of 1834. So convinced was Mr. May by this time of the soundness of the Abolitionist position, and so earnest in its defence, that his ardor got the better of his reverence and for the first time he found himself debating the merits of Abolitionism with the man for whom, of all living men, he had the greatest admiration. "His principal, if not his only objections were alleged against the severity of our denunciations, the harshness of our language, the vehemence, heat, and excitement caused by our meetings." He dwelt upon these objections until Mr. May became first impatient, then indignant, and broke out warmly, —

Dr. Channing, I am tired of these complaints. . . . It is not our fault that those who might have managed this reform more prudently have left us to manage it as we may be able. It is not our fault that those who might have pleaded for the enslaved so much more eloquently, both with the pen and with the living voice, than we can, have been silent. We are not to blame, sir, that you, who, more perhaps than any other man, might have so raised the voice of remonstrance that it should have been heard throughout the length and breadth of the land, — we are not to blame, sir, that you have not so spoken. And now because inferior men have begun to speak and act against what you yourself acknowledge to be an awful injustice, it is not becoming in you to complain of us, because we do it in an inferior style. Why, sir, have you not moved, why have you not spoken before?

There was an awful silence during which Mr. May awaited with anxiety the answer to this dar-

ing speech. Then he heard Dr. Channing saying very quietly, "Brother May, I acknowledge the justice of your reproof; I have been silent too long." Soon after Mr. May was made general agent of the Antislavery Society, and his work took him to Boston. He was barely settled when Channing called upon him and invited him to preach for him. He received no similar invitation during his stay in Boston, which extended over a year. But Dr. Channing had not been wholly inactive before Mr. May so lovingly admonished him. In a letter of July, 1834, he had written Dr. Follen[1] protesting that unanimity was not necessary to the antislavery cause; that there should be a body of men, not formally Abolitionists, "but who uncompromisingly maintain that the abolition of slavery ought *immediately* to be decided on, and means used for *immediately commencing* this work." A little later he was "much shocked by the New York riots" which had greeted Garrison on his return from his first visit to England. "The duty of the Abolitionists," he wrote, "seems to me clear. Whilst they ought to review their principles with great deliberation, they ought not, at this moment, to *recant* anything,

[1] Dr. Charles Follen, a German scholar, teacher, and preacher, who came to this country in 1824, seeking a refuge from European political espionage and imprisonment. He was one of Channing's dearest friends. He joined himself to Garrison in 1833, but, while demanding emancipation, would have compensated the masters. We shall find his name associated with the most painful experience of Channing's life. See *Life* (1844), by his wife, his coequal mate in mind and heart and work, and "Charles Follen," page 538 of Sprague's *Unitarian Pulpit*.

because recantation will certainly be set down to the account of fear." On his return from Newport a few weeks later, he made the riots the subject of his first discourse to his people. Dr. Follen hailed it as "an Abolition sermon;" others denounced it as such. It is, for us, one of several proofs that Channing did not confine his antislavery utterance to Thanksgiving and Fast days, as some of the "dumb dogs" of recent times have pleaded in their own defence. But with its condemnation of the mob spirit, and its demand for the Abolitionists of the right of speech, he mingled adverse criticism of their violence of denunciation, and he declined to print the sermon because of its inadequacy: "Were I to publish it, I should feel myself bound not only to vindicate the invaded rights of the antislavery societies, but to enlarge on what I deem their errors." Yet he ranked himself with them in the estimation of the slaveholders and their allies when he exclaimed in the sermon, "Property in man! Property in man! You may claim matter to any extent you please as property, — the earth, the ocean, and the planets, but you cannot touch a soul. I can as easily conceive the angels of heaven being property as men." Mr. May was not so easily convinced of Channing's complete Abolitionism as Dr. Follen. Indeed, it was with this sermon fresh in his mind that he rebuked his tardy sympathy.

Channing wrote in October, 1834, "This city has not yet incurred the guilt and disgrace of outrages

intended to put down by force the public discussion of slavery. May we be spared this infamy!" The hope was prophecy of coming storm. The year 1835 was preëminently the year of mobs, and Boston's turn came October 21, when, with much incidental uproar and outrage, Garrison was dragged in the noose of a rope over the ground of the Boston Massacre, barely escaping alive, and was finally shut up in jail by a distinguished mayor who could assure his safety only by assuming him to be the instigator of the mob. This had no sudden inspiration, but originated in an anti-Abolition meeting which was convened in Faneuil Hall, on the 21st of the preceding August, Mayor Lyman in the chair. Channing wrote a semi-public letter in advance of the meeting, deprecating its spirit and purpose. He said: —

> Any resolve passed at the proposed meeting, implying, however indirectly, that a human being can rightfully be held and treated as property, — any resolve intended to discourage the free expression of opinion on slavery, or to sanction lawless violence which has been directed against the antislavery societies, — any resolve implying that the Christian and philanthropist may not strive to abolish slavery by moral influences, by appeals to the reason, conscience, and heart of the slaveholder, — any resolve expressing stronger sympathy with the slaveholder than with the slave, or tending at all to encourage the continuance of slavery, — will afflict me beyond measure . . . That Boston should in any way lend itself to the cause of oppression will be a dark omen indeed.

Four days after the meeting Channing wrote as if his fears had been confirmed by the event. But the Abolitionists, he said, "have a deep consciousness of the truth and excellence of their cause. They have, too, the immense advantage of acting from great principles; and these alone give permanent strength. Such men cannot be put down." It is, however, remarkable that the Boston mob leaves hardly a trace upon his contemporaneous letters,[1] while there can hardly be a doubt that it was the inspiration of his first elaborate antislavery publication, the "Slavery" pamphlet. In the six-volume edition this covers one hundred and fifty-three pages, embracing eight chapters and "Notes." His first business was to show that man cannot be justly held or used as property, his second to show that he has God-given rights as a human being, of which slavery is a gross infraction; the next, "to unfold the evils of slavery," followed by "some remarks on the means of removing it," and others on Abolitionism. Here, as everywhere, Channing's teaching ran up into the high peaks of his confidence in the dignity of human nature and the fatherhood of God. A man "cannot be property in the sight of God and justice because he is a rational, immortal, moral being; because created in God's image, and therefore in the highest sense

[1] He had no immediate knowledge of it, being in Newport at the time. A sharp taste of it would, perhaps, have stirred him as it did Wendell Phillips and Dr. Bowditch, but generally the most striking events were less influential with him than his profound meditation.

his child; because created to unfold Godlike faculties and to govern himself by a divine law written on his heart and republished in God's Word." "Such a being was plainly made for an End in Himself. He is a Person, not a Thing. He is an End, not a mere Instrument or Means." The chapter on "Rights" keeps to the same high ground. The rights which are sacred above all others are those which enable a man to unfold his intellectual and moral nature, which as a slave he cannot do. Chapter iv., "The Evils of Slavery," was that which gave the least pleasure to the slaveholders and their apologists and the most satisfaction to the Abolitionists. It was a terrible arraignment of the peculiar institution. It was found "radically, essentially evil," equally ruinous to master and slave, incapable of improvement, except in the direction of its subversion. Coming to "Means of Removing Slavery," the first mentioned was as unacceptable to the slaveholder as immediate emancipation. He "must admit the great principle that man cannot rightfully be held as property." Colonization was deprecated as "a resolution to perpetuate the evil without end." A system of gradualism was preferred to immediate emancipation, some of the evils which have attended the latter course being clearly foreseen. To the objection that a mixture of races would result from emancipation, he said, "Can this objection be urged in good faith? Can this mixture go on faster or more criminally than at the present time? Can the slaveholder use the word

'Amalgamation' without a blush?" The next chapter reversed the effect of that on the evils of slavery. The Abolitionists, to whom it was devoted, liked it least; the proslavery party most. Of such Abolitionists as he knew, he said, "I honor them for their strength of principle, their sympathy with their fellow creatures, and their active goodness." He characterized the party as "singularly free from political and religious sectarianism, and distinguished by the absence of management, calculation, and worldly wisdom." He repudiated the assumption that they were endeavoring to stir up slave insurrection. He denounced the persecutions to which they were subjected. He criticised "Immediate Emancipation" as a motto likely to mislead, the motto going farther than the explanations. But the gravamen of his adverse criticism was the fierce, bitter, and exasperating "tone of Abolitionist agitation." From this criticism he never receded, though assigning to it less and less relative importance, and arriving at the conclusion that it was not the form but the substance of the Abolitionist attack on slavery that infuriated the Southern, and the apologetic Northern mind. Meantime he cordially exonerated the majority of Abolitionists from blame upon this score, and excepted "many of their publications" as "calm and well considered, abounding in strong reasoning, and imbued with an enlightened love of freedom."

The two fires between which Channing habitually found himself on antislavery ground now

made him the object of a lively fusillade. Garrison summed up his objections in the "Liberator" under twenty-five heads, denouncing the book as "utterly destitute of any redeeming, reforming power," as "calumnious, contradictory, and unsound;" and, as such, it "ought not to be appropriated by any genuine Abolitionist. He that is not with us is against us." But other Abolitionists were disposed to take the proverb by the other horn, "He that is not against us is for us." Ellis Gray Loring, than whom there was no better Abolitionist, not one of Channing's parishioners,[1] but an untiring instigator of his antislavery spirit, which they, for the most part, actively or sullenly opposed, was "grieved at some few censures of the Abolitionists," but added, "Nineteen twentieths of the book are sound in principle, and I will not grudgingly bestow my gratitude and praise for this splendid testimony to the truth." Halfway between the extreme of Garrison's criticism and the opposite came John Quincy Adams,[2] objecting

[1] The Garrison *Story* reports him as one, other authorities agreeing, but Mr. F. J. Garrison sends me a letter written by Mr. Loring's daughter which decides as above and even minimizes the personal relation.

[2] It is refreshing to read of the "jesuitical complexion" of Channing's discrimination: it gives us a pleasant shock of difference from the traditional tone, and it is very interesting to note the development of J. Q. Adams's opinion of Channing from this point forward, until it became extremely favorable. For an elaborate Abolitionist criticism of "Slavery" in the best spirit, see Samuel J. May's in *Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict*, pp. 177–185. It was, he says, "a far greater help to our cause than we at first expected, and we look back with no little admiration on one who, enjoying as he did, in the utmost serenity,

that slaveholders could quote parts of the "Slavery" as a palliation of their system, "but it is in fact an inflammatory if not incendiary publication." The most virulent assault upon the pamphlet was that of James T. Austin, whose rôle throughout the fourth decade of the nineteenth century was that of devil's advocate. He was a devout Unitarian, a writer for the "Examiner," and a distinguished member of the Brattle Street Society, sitting conspicuously in the broad aisle.[1] He put the worst possible construction on the pamphlet, especially upon Channing's indictment of slavery for its encouragement of licentiousness. Another point was better made: "I charge him, in spite of his disclaimer, with the *doctrine of* INSURRECTION." For had not Channing said that "a human being cannot rightfully be held and used as property; no legislation, not that of all countries and worlds, could make him so"? "There

the highest reputation as a writer and as a divine, put at hazard the repose of the rest of his life, and sacrificed hundreds of the admirers of his genius, eloquence, and piety, by espousing the cause of the oppressed, which most of the eminent men in the land would not touch with one of their fingers."

[1] *Sic* Dr. E. E. Hale in a private letter; but Oliver Johnson, Garrison's excellent coadjutor, says that he was one of Channing's own people. He married a daughter of my townsman, Elbridge Gerry, signer of the Declaration, and wrote his biography. Hence he could not have spoken with the highest Boston authority, which was first Federalist, then Whig. A Democrat was a social pariah. George Bancroft, gentleman and scholar, after a brilliant candidacy for the governorship of Massachusetts, met a lady of the Whig aristocracy on the street, and said to her, "I did not find you at home when I called." "No," she answered, "and you never will." I am indebted to Senator Hoar for the story.

is, then," Austin argued, "no *legal* slavery;" and if no legal slavery, then why may not the slave "rise in his strength or his madness, and shake off his chains?" There was nothing in the logic of Channing's doctrine to prevent. There was the bias of his peaceful disposition, his dread of violence. And it is interesting to find him taking comfort in that unresisting meekness of the negro which Theodore Parker set down against him as a grave defect, contending that —

> Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.

That Channing was drawing closer to the Abolitionists was shown the next spring after the publication of "Slavery" by his first appearance at a meeting of the Antislavery Society. He wished to see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears, and judge accordingly. If he had gone sooner, he might sooner have been disabused of some of his exaggerated prepossessions. He "heard nothing so exceptionable as the vituperations, the coarse, unfeeling personalities which too often dishonor Congress." He was struck with the talent of so many plain people for effective utterance. "I received the impression which I delight to receive of the intellectual energy of the mass of the people." The most gratifying circumstance was a speech by a colored man of apparently pure African blood. "I felt that he was a partaker with me of that humanity for which I unceasingly thank my Creator." The life of the meeting he found

very striking. "Nothing was said or done mechanically. . . . You know by instinct whether you are surrounded by life or death. This body was alive. I am sure that if the stirrers up of mobs could have looked into the souls of these Abolitionists, they would have seen the folly of attempting to put them down by such persecutions as they can bring to bear on them. Nothing but the Inquisition, the stake, the scaffold; nothing but extermination can do the work." Abolition had most to fear from the indifference of people "worshipping what they call prosperity." But "there is one ground for believing that Abolitionism may endure, even if unopposed. With all its faults, it is founded on religious principle. It is thus bound up with the strongest principle of human nature. It will not, therefore, be easily discouraged by neglect . . . and unexpected events may prepare a multitude for its influence." He found nowhere such scepticism concerning human progress as in Boston. Hence the town's proslavery spirit and its opposition to all antislavery speech and action. He cited Harriet Martineau's experience in proof of the average social temper.

A distinguished lady from England, having every moral as well as intellectual claim on kind attention, was excluded from our hospitality in no small degree, because in an Antislavery meeting she had expressed the feelings which every man and woman in her country is known to partake, and in which she only gave utterance to the sentiment of the civilized world. Her

sex and character did not secure her from insult in our newspapers.[1]

Under Channing's own roof, both at Newport and in Boston, Miss Martineau enjoyed ample hospitality, and no contemporary account of him was more highly appreciative than that contained in her "Retrospect of Western Travel."

The wide circulation to which the "Slavery" pamphlet attained, and the attention it received, encouraged Channing to another venture in the fall of 1836. James G. Birney, a Kentucky slaveholder, who had freed his slaves and set up an antislavery paper in Cincinnati, "The Philanthropist," was disappointed of his hope that, by bringing his press across the Ohio, it would be safe from mob violence. A mob, instigated and led by such gentlemen as had organized the Boston mob, destroyed the press and drove the editor from the city. Thereupon the word in Channing's heart was like a fire shut up in his bones, and he was weary with forbearing until he had written a public letter (26 pages) to Birney, in which he brought an eloquent defence to the freedom of antislavery speech, while at the same time he read the Abolitionists another lecture on the violence of their denunciations. The Abolitionists resented this (some of them) as they had resented their particu-

[1] *Cf.* Harriet Martineau's *Autobiography*. The meeting referred to was most notable; the first of the Women's Antislavery Society after the Boston mob. Francis Jackson offered his house for it, at the risk of its destruction, and the women assembled with the resolvedness of martyrs going to the stake.

lar chapter in "Slavery." The letter was copied entire into the "Liberator," Garrison commenting, "A million letters like this would never emancipate a single slave, but only rivet his fetters more strongly." Yet the letter showed that Channing, having "put the first shovelful upon the earth," like "the superior man" of Confucius, was "going on." It was much less academic than the "Slavery," much more homely and vigorous in its style. For the Abolitionists, for all the doubts, it had such lofty praise as must have cost Channing many "golden opinions." He had learned something from the reception which his former book had met: "that the Abolitionists are not the only people who exasperate the South. Can the calmest book be written on slavery without producing the same effect?" He held up a mirror, looking wherein the Boston conservative found himself one of "a palsying, petrifying order," "unwilling that the most enormous abuses should be touched, lest the established order of things, so propitious to themselves, should be disturbed."

The letter to Birney suggests the fact that during the last lustrum of Channing's life one section of the Abolitionists was rapidly becoming more political in its methods and its aspirations; whence the Liberty Party, with Birney for its presidential candidate in 1840, and again in 1844. Channing's sympathies were wholly with Garrison in his opposition to this tendency. "Antislavery is to triumph," he said, "not by force or appeals to

interest, but by becoming a living part of the public conscience and religion [exactly Garrison's view]. Just in proportion as it is complicated with political questions and feelings it is shorn of its strength." The words are Channing's, the thought is the thought of Garrison when he says, "There is a class of politicans who will use Abolitionism to rise by, but will disgrace it by want of principle." But it took all kinds to make the newer world. Channing had more prescience in the matter of the South's threats to secede than had Parker further on: "On this point the South does not merely bluster, but is in earnest."

He wrote at Christmas, 1837, that the fear of dissolving the Union was the great obstruction to Northern antislavery progress, but he was then already upon record as contemplating such dissolution as the less of two evils. On the 1st of August he had completed and signed an open letter to Henry Clay (80 pages, 12mo) on the "Annexation of Texas." Of all Channing's contributions to the antislavery movement, this was the best adapted to its end. An enthusiastic English critic hailed it as the best pamphlet ever written. It went far to put Channing in rank with the great pamphleteers, Defoe and Paine and Cobbett and Voltaire. Garrison's "Thoughts on Colonization," though more final in its operation, was not more happily conceived. So exigent a critic as Mrs. Chapman gave it credit for delaying the annexation of Texas for a term of years. No better evidence could

be afforded that Channing was becoming "less ministerial and more manly." But for its moral elevation, it would have had more the appearance of a legal than of a clerical document. It reviewed the Texan insurrection with energy and discrimination and overwhelmed it with a flood of righteous indignation. It proceeded to denounce the proposed annexation as the adoption of a career of encroachment, war, and crime. "The seizure of Texas will not stand alone. It will darken our future history. It will be linked by an iron necessity to long-continued deeds of rapine and blood." Much as he would deplore the dissolution of the Union he could "submit to it more readily than to the reception of Texas into the Confederacy." "I shrink from that contamination. I shrink from an act which is to pledge us as a people to robbery and war, to the work of upholding and extending slavery without limitation or end." Here, then, was Channing anticipating that part of Garrison's programme which a few years further on attained to scriptural expression, and after the Compromise of 1850, more especially brought on him peculiar execration. But when the annexation of Texas was again imminent, in 1844, there were a good many "conscience Whigs" who were prepared to follow Channing's lead.[1] He said, "It seems to me not only the right, but the duty, of the free

[1] A Whig convention in Worcester passed a disunion resolution proposed by Rev. Samuel May (not Samuel J.), general agent of the American Antislavery Society. This was in 1844.

States, in case of the annexation of Texas, to say to the slaveholding States, 'We regard this act as the dissolution of the Union. . . . We will not become partners in your wars with Mexico and Europe, in your schemes of spreading and perpetuating slavery, in your hopes of conquest, in your unrighteous spoils.'"

The Texan pamphlet was still damp from the press when Elijah P. Lovejoy was shot and killed (Nov. 7) while defending his antislavery press in Alton, Illinois. When the news arrived in Boston (Nov. 19), Dr. Channing, conversing with Samuel E. Sewall, suggested a meeting in Faneuil Hall to protest against the violence and murder, and headed a petition of one hundred names to the mayor and aldermen for the use of the hall. A counter-petition was sent in, and in response to it the hall was refused to Channing and his friends. Thereupon he wrote a stirring "Appeal to the Citizens of Boston," which was published in the "Advertiser," with opposing editorial comments. The fruit of the appeal was a crowded meeting in the old supreme court room, at which Dr. Channing was thanked by resolution for the "eloquent and dignified vindication" of his address and requested to prepare the resolutions for a meeting in Faneuil Hall, if the city officers could be induced to recede from their refusal. They were so induced by the re-presentment of Channing's original petition with many names added to the original number. Five thousand people crowded the hall

at ten o'clock in the morning. Channing's friend, Jonathan Phillips, presided, and after the offering of a prayer, Channing addressed the meeting.[1] His first words were a disavowal of any partisan character in the meeting. Such a character would have kept him away, "But when a great question of humanity is discussed here, when a number of my fellow citizens meet here to lift up their voices against violence and murder, and in support of the laws and the press, I feel that my place *is here*." The resolutions prepared by Channing were presented by Benjamin F. Hallet, whose name in my boyhood had come to be a by-word and a hissing on account of his proslavery speech and action. Garrison, in a letter of the following day, pronounced them excellent; but they had not the "birr and smeddum" which Garrison, a master in this kind, would have put into them. George S. Hillard, who later fell so far away as to approve Webster's "great refusal" of March 7, 1850, supported the resolutions in a speech the effect of which "was at once elevated and soothing." There seemed to be some danger that the Cradle of Liberty would justify its name by putting the assemblage to sleep. But Attorney-General James T. Austin saved the day. He flouted the resolutions as "abstract propositions," accused Lovejoy of inciting the slaves to insurrection, said

[1] One of Mrs. Chapman's depreciations of Channing was that he attended the meeting on the urgency of Ellis Gray Loring. Such her recollection after the lapse of more than forty years.

that he had "died as the fool dieth," and compared the mob to the fathers of the Revolution. A tremendous uproar followed, during which Jonathan Phillips said to Channing, "Can you stand thunder?" "Such thunder as this in any measure," answered the little man. He sat as one on the seashore overlooking a tempestuous sea and expecting momentarily to be submerged, perhaps with crimson waves. Then struck for Wendell Phillips his first glorious hour. His speech reached its climax, through a storm of cheers and hisses, in words as memorable as any that he ever spoke: "I thought those pictured lips [those of the portraits in the hall] would have broken into voice to rebuke the recreant American, the slanderer of the dead. . . . Sir, for the sentiments he has uttered, on soil consecrated by the prayers of Puritans and the blood of patriots, the earth should have yawned and swallowed him up."[1]

In its main effect, the meeting answered the purpose which inspired Channing's action: it vin-

[1] Channing always loved to recall that "psychological moment," and to dwell upon the brilliant effect of Phillips's voice and manner, seconding his words. The speech was not Phillips's first, as we are commonly told. He had made several before at antislavery meetings (*sic* Oliver Johnson), the maiden one in Lynn, March 28, 1837. Miss Peabody (*Reminiscences*, p. 360) writes of Channing's admiration for an anonymous reply to Austin by Charles Sumner, which was the maiden fleshing of his antislavery sword. But Sumner sailed on the day of the meeting for Europe, and if he attended the meeting or wrote anything about it, his omniscient biographer, E. L. Pierce, knew nothing of these things.

dicated the freedom of the press in Boston for the time being. It was a signal for more parishioners and friends to fall away from him than had before done so. Had he not taken a leading part in the defence of a notorious Abolitionist who had resisted unto death an attempt to put a gag upon his mouth? But while the Lovejoy meeting identified Channing with the Abolitionists, both in the conservative and the antislavery mind, as he had not before been identified with them, a letter from him to the "Liberator," requiring their general disavowal of Lovejoy's disposition to forcibly defend his rights, did much to chill their satisfaction in his closer sympathy. Garrison, more completely non-resistant than Channing, had, in his first editorial on the murder, expressed deep regret that Lovejoy had taken an attitude of armed defence. But he thought, very justly, that it was too much for Channing to demand that *all* Abolitionists, non-resistants, many of them, in less and less degrees than Channing, should repudiate Lovejoy's course. The bottom fact was that Channing's disposition was more peace-loving and non-resistant than Garrison's, though he had mental reservations in his peace doctrine which Garrison could not entertain. That stern reformer often beat his ploughshares and his pruning hooks into words that were half battles.

Channing had no personal relations with Garrison. This is the most inexplicable feature of his antislavery career, and the most unfortunate. We

are told that in the early thirties Garrison was not the inheritor of his present great renown, but the obscure young man of Harrison Gray Otis's description and Lowell's poem, "with no visible auxiliary but a negro boy." But Channing did not generally require a trumpet of fame to be sounded before the young men to whom he lent a sympathetic ear, if they came with any plea for his humane consideration of a just and righteous cause. Garrison's cause was preëminently such for Channing. Moreover, among those holding up Garrison's hands were men and women for whom Channing had an affectionate admiration, Mrs. Child, the Chapmans and Sewalls, Ellis Gray Loring, Samuel J. May, and Charles Follen, with many others, and the wonder is that he was not curious to know directly what manner of man so won their love and trust. But he was not, or he checked the impulse as often as it stirred his heart. More than once Garrison wrote to him, privately, soliciting his coöperation. One of his letters is preserved for us in the Garrisons' "Story." It is more scriptural in its style than Channing's writing, cast in a heavy mould, but so intensely serious that its (apparent) failure to elicit a response is passing strange. These two chief men of Boston in those years — not forgetting Webster — met only once: this in the senate chamber of the State House, March 4, 1836, at a committee hearing of Abolitionists in the matter of penal enactments for their supposed offences against law and order. It was a critical moment for them,

and Channing's appearance on the scene was a fresh sign of his growing sympathy. His shawl and muffler "more express'd than hid him" as he walked the length of the room and coming to Garrison shook hands with him. "Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other," said Mrs. Chapman, making an ambiguous quotation. Channing afterwards explained that he did not know that he was addressing Garrison, but that he was glad to speak with him. Harriet Martineau was now visiting the Channings, and Mrs. Chapman invited them with her to tea "to meet Mr. Garrison." He did not come and Miss Martineau explained that the Garrison rider had defeated the bill. Here was a mystery that I cannot solve. Could they have known each other, it is hardly to be conceived that either would have been much swerved by the other from his characteristic course, — Channing would still have questioned Garrison's severity, and his own consistent individualism would have been repelled by Garrison's *organized* agitation; but they would have understood each other better. Channing would have discovered that Garrison's severity was as dispassionate as his own mildness, — that it was a deliberately adopted method of reform, — and Garrison would not have had to wait for the Channing "Memoir" of 1848 to discover that his own strictures on Channing had been mistaken in some essential particulars.[1]

[1] Just after Garrison's criticism of the "Slavery" pamphlet, and not long before the State House meeting, he went to hear Chan-

The cup of Channing's antislavery iniquity was not yet full. The last years of his life were destined to be more engaged with antislavery thought and work than any of the preceding. Thus, in 1839, he wrote under the form of a letter to Jonathan Phillips (the open letter was his favorite vehicle when he would reach the general public ear) a searching criticism upon Henry Clay's speech of February 7 of that year; in 1840 he wrote "Emancipation," a study of West India emancipation as bearing on our own problem; and in 1842, the year of his death, a double pamphlet on the case of the Creole, a slave-ship whose *cargo* had mutinied, — a strange thing and yet most natural; and in the same year the swan-song of his antislavery career and of his life, the Lenox Address. I will speak further of these things when I come to his last stage.

It was the manner of Channing's life to pile up his energy in special tasks, undertaken and carried out with great deliberation; but the bulk and weight of his antislavery work and influence were not by any means exhausted by the half-dozen monumental things on which he put forth his full

ning preach and found the sermon "full of beauty and power; worthy to be written in starry letters upon the sky." He sat with Mrs. Chapman, to whom its privilege had been extended, in the Higginson pew. Next day came a note from Mr. Higginson withdrawing the privilege. If Channing had heard of that, he would, I think, have invited Garrison to his house at once and have learned what a kindly human face there was behind the vizor of the warrior's casque. Mr. Higginson was Colonel T. W. Higginson's uncle. *E pur si muove!*

strength. He had many correspondents in America and Europe, and the burden of his letters for ten years before his death was oftener slavery than any other theme. As with his letters, so with his conversation. Such a friendly critic and adviser as Ellis Gray Loring was an inestimable good, where every fresh aspect of the great anxiety had to be considered with that openness of mind which Channing brought to questions of all kinds. Sometimes he got illumination from the dark side of the moon, as when a distinguished physician, who owned a plantation in Cuba, begged him to come and be his guest, and promised, as a special inducement, that the slave-whipping should be done on another plantation during his stay. Channing turned suddenly upon his heel and left the room. He could not trust himself, we are told, to express his indignation. But he would seem to have expressed it very well. The long-drawn trouble had its incidents of peculiar painfulness. Mrs. Chapman wrote in 1835 of a notice of George Thompson's speaking given "in Dr. Channing's church, where a notice of our meetings has never been refused a reading." A little later this could not be said. Antislavery notices on their way to the pulpit were waylaid and captured by the standing committee and never saw the light of day again. This was a grief to Channing, and some things were as bitter to him as gall, — for example, the refusal of the church for a meeting of the Antislavery Society, though Channing had indorsed the

request as "very agreeable" to him personally. Shortly after, in contempt of his wishes, the use of the church was granted to the Colonization Society. And there was worse to come.

To measure justly the amount and quality of Channing's courage in his antislavery utterance and affiliation we must consider the nature and character of the man and the circumstances of his life. If he had relished controversy, if he had dearly loved a moral fight, if his mind had been easily made up, if he had had no fatal disposition to hear the other side, if his parishioners and friends had generally sympathized with his antislavery views and had incited him to speech and action, if his fellow ministers had acted in like manner, — all that he did on antislavery lines would have been as easy as for him to turn his hand. These would have been the lines of least resistance. The charges of backwardness and timidity that were brought against him could in that case be easily sustained. But Channing did not love controversy and opposition; he had no *gaudium certaminis*. He was not, I think, a man of natural courage, but one of delicate and shrinking flesh, and corresponding mind. His sermons and addresses abound in praises of moral courage, and he exemplified the trait he praised. But it was hard for him to do it. These praises were exhortations to himself to keep right on. They burned his ships; they cut off his retreat; they made any flinching on his part impossible. The

things he said and did required *of him* a great deal of courage, however much or little they might have required of a quite different man.[1] Wellington said that men of natural courage did not make the best soldiers, but those who, shrinking from the conflict, did not flinch because their sense of duty held them to their work. Channing was a good soldier of this kind.

Moreover, nearly all the influences pressing on him were of a deterrent character. He was sensitive to the social entourage, and would gladly have kept on good terms with it, but its average temper was hostile to all his higher aspirations. One may read in Pierce's "Life of Sumner" what that temper was when Sumner was taking up his antislavery work.[2] It had not changed much in a dozen years. With this society, — "intellectual (?), consolidated, despotic over individual thought, insisting on uniformity of belief in matters which were related to its interests, and frowning upon novelties which struck at its prestige," — Channing, because of his antislavery sentiments, was *persona non grata*. He was called a Jacobin.

[1] I have in my possession Whittier's autograph letter to Mr. W. F. Channing, in which, referring to Mrs. Chapman's depreciation of Channing, he says, "As to the matter of courage and self-sacrifice very few of us have evinced so much of both as thy father. He threw upon the altar the proudest reputation, in letters and theology, of his day. With the single exception of Lydia Maria Child, I know of no one who made a greater sacrifice than thy father." For entire letter see Pickard's *Whittier*, p. 642.

[2] See, also, C. F. Adams's *Richard Henry Dana*, which abounds in confirmation of the truth of Pierce's characterization.

Rumors were started and believed that he had political ambitions, that he was about to abandon the ministry and go into politics. He was not indifferent to his good repute, his honored name, but his antislavery course put these in constant jeopardy. He knew it, and he kept right on. The affection of his people was much more to him than his public reputation, and to do what do he must was to forfeit much of this. His well-bred parishioners, "gentlemen of property and standing," often passed him on the street without a sign of recognition or the most indifferent. His son never forgot the look of tender pain upon his father's face when such indignity was shown to him upon the Boston streets. The incident of the Follen service was typical of many things that Channing had to bear. That, in Wendell Phillips's opinion (I had it from his lips), measured the lowest deep of Boston's subserviency to the slaveholding interests. A deeper is not easily conceived.

Channing's antislavery course had the defects of his qualities, if they were defects. To hear the other side was as necessary for him as to hear one side only is for the majority of men. To "consider it again" was equally necessary. His was the Hamlet disposition rightly understood, — a holding back from action in the hope of reaching its ideal form. Hence he was slower than some others in the adoption of radical measures. But as compared with the average temper of the community, of his co-religionists, of his people, his was

so free and bold that it scandalized the social and religious Boston of his time. Good people wondered what he would do next. So, then, considering his shrinking delicacy of frame and mind, his distaste for all rough contacts, his holy fear of doing injustice to any person, or another's thought, his conservative environment, and the sacrifice of reputation, honor, and affection entailed by his antislavery course, it may be doubted whether any of his contemporaries did out his duty in a more steadily heroic fashion, or at a heavier cost. And it was not as if there was only one way of doing antislavery work. Then, as always, God "fulfilled himself in many ways." The destruction of slavery was, as Lincoln said of his own part in it, "a big job," and it required the united strength of many different individualities for its accomplishment. There were notes in the great music that once seemed discordant, but which to our later apprehension blend in a harmonious unity. Among these, that supplied by the exalted idealism of Channing was one of the purest, and contributed one of the most indispensable and effective parts of the symphonic whole.

CHAPTER X

THE SOCIAL REFORMER

It would be easy to misjudge the typical Boston Unitarian layman of Channing's time, by dwelling too exclusively upon Channing's relation to the antislavery reform. The typical layman was not highly cultured, but he was, perhaps, oftener college bred than he is now. He read the "Daily Advertiser," which never affronted his conservatism, but flattered his prejudices with assiduous and prudent care. He read the "Christian Examiner" and the London and Edinburgh quarterlies to a degree that Unitarian laymen in this year of grace do not read things of similar weight. He wrote for the "Examiner"[1] such articles as that of Nathan Hale on railroads, and that of James T. Austin on Catholic emancipation. He took a more active part in denominational affairs than does the layman of our time, and was less absolutely swamped in the excess of clerical self-confidence. To be aware that he was gracious, kindly,

[1] The meeting to establish the *Examiner* was called by Channing and met in his study. His name headed the list of those pledged to carry it on; Professor Farrar's came next; Andrews Norton's next. The understanding that Channing would write for it was its best asset.

benevolent, public-spirited, charitable, we have only to think of such institutions as the Massachusetts General Hospital, McLean Asylum, Historical Society, Perkins Institution for the Blind, Charitable Mechanic Association, Boston Public Library and Athenæum, which he originated or fostered. His portrait has been drawn by Octavius Frothingham with entire sincerity. It is nominally that of Mr. Frothingham's grandfather, Peter C. Brooks; but a good moral portrait of any one of a hundred prominent Unitarians of 1830 would appear much the same. Narrow, genial, unimaginative, friendly, strictly honest, not devoid of sentiment, but inhospitable to ideas, strong in domestic virtue, and with a serene self-consciousness of doing pretty well upon the whole, — such was the Unitarian layman who furnished Channing with the social material with and for which he had to work towards higher social ends. Up to a certain point Channing found him tractile, and even ductile; beyond that, oppugnant and immovable. Hence moments of profound depression, and the feeling that his labor had been spent in vain. His antislavery temper was but one manifestation of a moral elevation that was wearisome to the typical layman, as if Channing were expecting creatures without wings to fly. Not moral elevation, but a Franklinian sobriety, a solid, stolid, steady-going common sense, was the Unitarian layman's characteristic note in Channing's time. What he would do on lines of social reform must

be done with this kind of personal stuff. The Unitarian layman would walk a mile with him, or twain, but when Channing invited him to soar with him into the upper air, he said, "I pray thee have me excused."

If the later years of Channing's life emphasized his engagement in social problems to a degree without previous correspondence, it was not quite the same on other lines as on those of his antislavery development. There the early impressions remained strangely in abeyance, until they were renewed and reinforced by his acquaintance with slavery in the West Indies. But from a very early period in his ministry he conceived this as a social work, and might have made "The field is the world" the scriptural legend of its most distinctive aim. The uses which he contemplated for his new Berry Street annex in 1817, were, as we have seen, more than parochial. His early interest in socialism connects with his latest interest in the Brook Farm experiment without a break, whatever, here and there, the attenuation of the thread. The Richmond communism and the teaching of his admired Adam Ferguson found their religious counterpart and fulfilment for him in the New Testament conception of the kingdom of heaven upon earth. It is nevertheless true that his social interests tended to much more careful and elaborate expression in his culminating period, and the vast concerns of war, intemperance, crime and its punishment, poverty, education, social re-

organization bulked the horizon of his mind in ever more portentous, sometimes appalling shapes.

War, as Channing viewed it, was one of the greatest social evils of his time. From his tenth year to his thirty-fifth, the world was full of it; the long peace of exhaustion followed; his sentiments were independent of the change. Doubtless they were profoundly nourished by the incidents of the Napoleonic wars, but the piping times of peace brought no abatement of his horror. The same note that sounds in his anti-war sermons of 1812, 1814, 1816, sounds with equal clearness in his great sermon of 1835 and his noble lecture of 1838; incidentally in many intervening sermons and in letters innumerable. The Peace Society of Massachusetts was instituted in his own parsonage, and of all his personal tributes, that to its secretary, the Rev. Noah Worcester, preëminently the peace advocate of his time, has the accent of profoundest admiration. Fundamental to Channing's detestation of war was the same principle that was fundamental to his detestation of slavery: "Let the worth of a human being be felt; . . . let it be understood that a man was made to enjoy inalienable rights, to improve lofty powers, to secure a vast happiness, and a main pillar of war will fall." It was as a moral evil that war must be made to cease. Its economic evils, its monstrous cruelties, were a little matter in comparison with the passions it represented and let loose. With General Sherman he believed that "war is hell," but in

a deeper sense. "The field of battle is a theatre got up for the exhibition of crime on a grand scale. There the hell within the human breast blazes out fiercely and without disguise. A more fearful hell in any region of the universe cannot well be conceived. There the fiends hold their revels and spread their fury." He would have the soldier's uniform made as unattractive as the hangman's, whose business, he said, is not more cruel or more tragical. He would have no military parades disfiguring great civic occasions. The soldier's courage he depreciated in comparison with that demanded by the exigencies of our everyday affairs. Nevertheless, he did not accept the principle of non-resistance unreservedly. Driving with Dr. Farley at Newport, a non-resistant tract of S. J. May's the subject of their talk, he clenched and shook his small, transparent hand, and said, "Brother Farley, sometimes we *must* fight!" But such a solemn and tremendous concern is war, that men must not entertain the possibility of it without full conviction of its justice and moral necessity, nor without unfeigned sorrow. Nothing could be more horrible than the gayety of nations on the eve of wars that bring them infinite suffering, and a long entail of misery, "an army of cripples, an army of beggars, and an army of thieves."[1] To the common notion that the able-bodied citizen is bound to fight in whatever conflict may be precipitated

[1] Not Channing's phrase, but the translation of a proverbial German rendering of what war leaves behind.

by the rashness of the executive and legislative powers, Channing opposed as frank a negative as to the notion that the policy of a government in time of war is something sacrosanct, not to be criticised by any citizen. If called to take part in unjust wars, he said, let the patriotic citizen deliberately refuse. "If martial law seize on him, let him submit. If hurried to prison, let him submit. If brought thence to be shot, let him submit. There must be martyrs to peace as well as to other principles of our religion. Let the good man be faithful unto death."

The causes of war and the means for its prevention were considered with an acumen that has had many pregnant comments since Channing left our earthly scene. It is pathetic to consider the mockery of his hopes by the events of recent years and by the national armaments that are handicapping the wage-earner of all countries, as with a soldier on each aching back. Particularly disappointed has been his hope that freedom of international communication and commerce would unharness the war-gods. That industrialism which was to bloom with the white flower of peace is proving a hotbed of *tiger*-lilies, the demand for new markets for the overplus of production breeding dangerous rivalries. The belief that "Trade follows the flag," as practically construed, means that the flag follows trade, dragged in the mire behind its grinding wheels. Nevertheless to read Channing's arraignment of war, his praise of peace, is to take heart

of cheer. In the light of his ideals, those that are most engrossing in the present shrivel into paltry insignificance, and our sight is so purged that we can clearly see the superiority of the better things to their pretentious hollowness.

Channing abounds in prophecies of thoughts and things that have been manifested progressively in the sixty years that have intervened between his death and now. His theology is the staple of preaching in hundreds of (nominally) orthodox churches. His antislavery sentiments were prophetic of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. But it was on the lines of social reform that his anticipation of our later thinking and working was most strongly marked, and this nowhere more distinctly than in his recurrence to the problems furnished by intemperance and its related pains and penalties. His interest in these problems found various expression. His sermons, his letters, and his talk often gravitated to them with a seriousness that was eloquent of an intense preoccupation, but on one occasion he put all his best thinking on the subject into an "Address on Temperance," which was to this subject what his Baltimore sermon was to his Unitarian doctrine. This address was delivered in the Boston Odeon on "the day appointed for the simultaneous meeting of the friends of temperance throughout the world," February 28, 1837. What he should perhaps have reserved for his climax he produced on the threshold of his elaborate discourse, where, ask-

ing, "What is the great, essential evil of intemperance?" he made answer, "It is *the voluntary extinction of reason.* The great evil is inward and spiritual. The intemperate man . . . sins immediately and directly against the rational nature, that divine principle which distinguishes between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong action, which distinguishes man from the brute." His invariable gravitation to the spiritual point of view finds here another illustration, — and it is precisely what our general acquaintance with his mind would lead us to expect. The consequences of intemperance were vividly described, — the terrible disfigurement, the physical wreck, the ensuing poverty, the domestic misery, but these punishments of the sin were nothing in comparison with the sin itself, the intellectual and moral degradation. "Honest, virtuous, noble-minded poverty is a comparatively light evil. What matters it that a man must for a few years live on bread and water?" The meagreness of Channing's diet made for the sincerity of this expression where a doubt of this would have been natural if he had had the reputation for good living that was enjoyed by some of his clerical contemporaries. "The poverty of the intemperate man," he said, "owes its great misery to its cause. He who makes himself a beggar, by having made himself a brute, is miserable indeed."

His next step was to "some remarks on the extent of temptations to this vice." Here at the

outset, he disclaimed the narrow view of these temptations as peculiar to the uneducated and the unrefined. He declared men of education, genius, sensibility, to be hardly less exposed, and a crowd of "mighty poets in their misery dead" surged up in confirmation of his words. He passed to "the heavy burden of care and toil which is laid on a large multitude of men;" from this to "the intellectual depression and the ignorance to which many are subjected;" next to "the general sensuality and earthliness of the community. . . . It is the sensuality, the earthliness of those who give the tone to public sentiment which is chargeable with a vast amount of the intemperance of the poor. . . . Unceasing struggles for the outward, earthly, sensual good constitute the chief activity which he sees around him." Concluding this part of his address, he named among the causes of intemperance the love of excitement and the want of self-respect induced among the poor and laborious by the general state of society. "Just as far as wealth is the object of worship, the measure of men's importance, the badge of distinction, so far there will be a tendency to self-contempt and self-abandonment among those whose lot gives them no chance of its acquisition."

But it was in that part of the address which dealt more particularly with the prevention or cure of intemperance that Channing's ideas were most conspicuously foregleams of the best thought upon this subject that has been developed since his time. "To save the laboring and poor from intemperance

we must set in action amongst them the means of intellectual, moral, and religious improvement." "Music might here be spread as freely as in Germany, and be made a lightener of toil, a cheerer of society, a relief of loneliness, a solace in the poorest dwellings." Boston's wasted wealth might be so economized as to build in a few years another Louvre and stock it with pictures and statues. In this connection Lowell, the founder of the Lowell Institute, got a good meed of praise. There was an earnest plea for a more fraternal intercourse between the more and less cultivated people, and at one point the brave spirits of Arnold Toynbee, Octavia Hill, and their companions in their noble work seem to be so near that we can hear the

> stairs, to Sin and Famine known,
> Sing with the welcome of their feet.

No prophet of the Old Testament or New ever lifted the veil of the future and disclosed its secret things more certainly than did Channing when this vision of the neighborhood guild and college settlement rose on his mind: —

> One gifted man with his heart in the work, who should live among the uneducated, to spread useful knowledge and quickening truth, by conversation and books, by frank and friendly intercourse, by encouraging meetings for improvement, by forming the more teachable into classes, and giving to these the animation of his presence and guidance, by bringing parents to an acquaintance with the principles of physical, intellectual, and moral education, by instructing families in the means

and conditions of health, by using, in a word, all the methods which an active, generous mind would discover or invent for awakening intelligence and moral life, — one gifted man, so devoted, might impart a new tone and spirit to a considerable circle; and what would be the result, were such men to be multiplied and combined, so that a community might be pervaded by their influence?

Another prophetic intimation was the plea for innocent amusements as a means of dissuasion from unlawful pleasures. His good word for dancing is one of the pleasantest of the surprises that he has for us. He would not have it a rare pleasure, reserved for great occasions, but an everyday amusement: —

> No amusement seems more to have a foundation in our nature. The animation of youth overflows spontaneously in harmonious movements. Its end is to realize perfect grace in motion, and who does not know that a sense of the graceful is one of the higher faculties of our nature? It is to be desired that dancing should become too common among us to be made the object of special preparation, as in the ball; that members of the same family, when confined by unfavorable weather, should recur to it for exercise and exhilaration; that branches of the same family should enliven in this way their occasional meetings; that it should fill up an hour in all the assemblages for relaxation in which the young form a part. . . . Why should not gracefulness be spread through the whole community?

To appreciate the daring radicalism of this advice one should remember the time when it was

advanced and the average temper of the community. Intolerant of the theatre as it was, he said, "I can conceive of a theatre which would be the noblest of all amusements." He would bring more direct influences to bear upon intemperance. He would discourage the social use of ardent spirits: "At the present moment, he who uses them or introduces them into his hospitalities, virtually arrays himself against the cause of temperance and humanity." He would discourage the sale of ardent spirits. But he anticipated the difficulty of enforcing any general prohibitory law, and the strength of local option. "Law is here the will of the people, and the legislature can do little unless sustained by the public voice."

Channing's interest in education was bound to be one of the most engaging interests of his private thought and public speech, so largely did he apprehend, not only his own work as that of a teacher, but that of his great exemplar, Jesus of Nazareth. He broke with the received tradition, and he anticipated Bushnell (perhaps following Fénelon) in his view of religion as an education of the soul and not a catastrophic conversion. But to education in its narrower denotation, as well as in its wider connotation, he gave much careful thought. He magnified the office of the teacher ("Remarks on Education," 1833) as loftily as any teacher could desire. "There is no office higher than that of a teacher of youth, for there is nothing on earth so precious as the mind, soul, character of the child.

. . . No profession should receive so liberal remuneration." He compared the teacher with the statesman, and affirmed that "to educate a child, in the true and large sense of that phrase, is a greater work than to rule a state." His ideal of a right education was so exalted that it outsoared our present standards hardly less than those of his own time. It was strictly an ideal of education, not an ideal of instruction merely; of leading out and not mere building in. It was both intellectual and moral. "Every school established by law should be specially bound to teach the duties of the citizen to the state, to unfold the principles of free institutions, and to train the young to an enlightened patriotism." Without definitively setting his face against corporal punishment, he reprobated its abuse in terms that were not less severe for being carefully chosen. The cruelty of Englishmen as soldiers and employers, he tentatively ascribed to the unrestrained and barbarous use of whipping in their schools. It is surprising that his disapproval of corporal punishment in schools was not more absolute. Pleading for the abolition of flogging in the navy, he said, with characteristic idealism, "What! Strike a man!" To strike a child, if not the same offence, can hardly be a less. It is more than probable that Channing's intercourse with Horace Mann led him to adopt the views of that great educator opposing corporal punishment in schools. When the "Examiner" article was written this intercourse had not begun. Eight

years later, 1841, he wrote a letter showing what good subjective reasons he had for his anxiety concerning the qualifications of teachers and their unsparing use of the rod.

> I look back on no part of my life with so much pain as on that which I gave to school-keeping. The interval of forty years has not relieved me from the sorrow and self-reproach which the recollection of it calls forth. . . . I was not only a poor teacher, but what was worse, my inexperience in the art of wholesome discipline led to the infliction of useless and cruel punishments. I was cruel through ignorance; and this is the main source of cruelty in schools.

The letter from which this passage is taken was in the main expressive of his satisfaction and delight in the first normal school at Lexington, of which "Father Peirce" of blessed memory was the principal. In the paternal relation between Mr. Peirce and his pupils he very specially rejoiced; also in the *precision* of his teaching. The development of the normal school system was very dear to him from its first inception till his death. He expected from the rich nothing but opposition to all plans for universal education. (His distrust of the rich seems to have steadily increased.) But he thought they might be conciliated and the poor advantaged by the multiplication of manual labor schools. "They are yet in their infancy, and need many experiments to determine the best modes of action." On the other hand, child labor in factories must not be so construed as to deprive chil-

dren of play and education, and there must be rigid factory inspection of the conditions of their work. On similar lines we find him busy with meetings and circulars (of his own writing) looking to the shortening of mercantile apprenticeships, with provisions for the extension of educational opportunities into the earlier business life. His interest in sailors was not confined to his endeavors towards the abolition of flogging in the navy. His views of educational expansion included these weather-beaten toilers of the sea. It would, perhaps, be easier to name the benevolent enterprises in which Dr. Channing was not a leading spirit than those in which he was. Father Taylor's Sailors' Bethel was certainly not one of the former. He was Father Taylor's first subscriber and his unfailing friend. His church was the first to welcome the Bethel minister to plead the sailor's cause, and many were the "old sinners from Beacon Street" whose eyes were moistened and whose purse-strings were loosened by the strong appeal. It was one of Channing's great delights to go to the Bethel and listen to Father Taylor's sea-born eloquence and watch the faces of the sailors, mobile as the wind-swept sea.[1] And Father Taylor had for him a reciprocal appreciation, saying, "He has splendid talents. What a pity that he has not been educated!" A palpable hit. He had not been educated in Father Taylor's

[1] For the best account of Father Taylor, see Dr. Bartol's *Radical Problems*, pp. 323–348.

way. He had never been to sea except as passenger. He was not, like Dr. Ripley's reprobate parishioner, "good at a fire." "Strip him of his protections," said John Pierpont, "and he would die." On the contrary, his protections were the sluices that drained off his power. He knew it to be so, and, hankering for a less sheltered life, rejoiced that some of his protections were being broken down.

No account of Channing's interest in educational reform would approximate completion that did not emphasize his relations of cordial sympathy with Horace Mann. Their acquaintance began in 1833, when Mann had already been in the lower house of the Massachusetts legislature seven or eight years, where Channing had watched his exceptionally honorable course with increasing interest and satisfaction. Mann remained an earnest colonizationist after Garrison's "Thoughts on Colonization" had converted many to a saner mind, and among these Dr. Channing. In 1834 we find Mann presiding over a colonization meeting, and, about the same time, Channing urging upon him that colonization was "a delusion and a snare, every freed slave creating a demand for a new slave to fill his place," thus encouraging slave-breeding in the South and an illicit slave trade. When, in 1837, Mann sacrificed his high political prospects to assume the secretaryship of the Massachusetts Board of Education, Channing wrote him a letter of enthusiastic approbation. "You could not

find," he said, "a nobler station. You must allow me to labor under you according to my opportunities. If at any time I can aid you, you must let me know." Accordingly we find him shortly going "into the interior," as he called it, as far as Taunton, to attend and address a convention called for the establishment of a county school association. Going to hear, he stayed to speak, pouring out his mind in a long extemporaneous speech, of which an admirable report has been preserved. On the same principle that he would educate one, he would educate all. A common nature demanded common schools, a common education. He had a patient ear for every enterprise looking to an improved education, but also had his hesitations and withdrawals. He dreaded the political bias, and had good reason to do so, as the event has shown. To Dr. Dewey, interested in a particular scheme, he wrote, "It grieves me that I am perpetually taking views which prevent my coöperation with others." He was much interested in Bronson Alcott's fine experiment, but he had his doubts "as to the degree to which the mind of the child should be turned inward. . . . The [young] soul is somewhat jealous of being watched; and it is no small part of wisdom to know when to leave it to its impulses and when to restrain it." He would respect the passion of the young for outward things, and not nourish in them an exclusive spirituality. Channing's breadth of view, his freedom from one-sidedness, is conspicuous in his relation to all social

matters. He conceived of penal legislation and the treatment of criminals as educational matters, and his views upon these subjects anticipated the wiser apprehensions of our new penology. He kept in touch with the prison reformers in this country and abroad, reading their publications, corresponding with them, studying their methods. In 1832 he was admitted by special privilege to the cells of the condemned murderers in the Philadelphia penitentiary, and his talk with them confirmed his faith in the inextinguishable spark of good in every soul.[1] He opposed solitary confinement, but favored the isolation of all prisoners from each other and their subjection to good influences. He opposed the monstrous cruelty of compulsory idleness in prisons, little dreaming to what extent this would be conceded to "organized labor" by our more recent legislation, single-eyed to the next voting day. He would have no vindictive and exemplary punishments, but a prison discipline looking exclusively to education, industry, and reformation.

It was said of Lessing that to go back to him is to go forward, and this might be said of Channing in respect to many things; most notably in respect to his hopes and aspirations for those whom he called "the laboring classes"— too proud a designation for the wage-earners to arrogate it to them-

[1] "The only bad influences which I saw came from the preaching, and religious tracts. . . . Truly this plague of Calvinism, like the vermin inflicted on Egypt, finds its way everywhere."— Letter of April 10, 1830.

selves, or for it to be conceded them by those whose work is salaried, or meets with an irregular reward.[1] Two lectures, "Self-Culture" (1838), and "The Elevation of the Laboring Classes" (1840), were the most eloquent and elaborate expression of these hopes and aspirations. Mr. Salter writes that "there are few things more stirring in the whole literature of social reform" than the second of these addresses, and the praise is well deserved. But it is no "lonely splendor" that these two addresses enjoy. They lift themselves in vaster bulk than any other social utterances of Channing, but not to a greater height than many of his letters, sermons, and other writings. Like many other things that Channing did, they are hard to classify, so common was it for him to make a clean breast of his whole social and spiritual philosophy on every occasion that furnished him with a great opportunity. I began to write of them when writing of his educational work, and they would not have been out of place under that head. But, as delivered, one of them in a course of "Franklin Lectures" designed for "working people," and the other before the Mechanic Apprentices' Library Association, their fittest place seems at the point

[1] The best study of Channing's industrial sociology and social reform work is that of William M. Salter, now of the Chicago Ethical Society, which first appeared in the *Unitarian Review*, March, 1888, and afterward in a pamphlet, *Channing as a Social Reformer*. This aspect of Channing, he says, still waits its due appreciation: "My conviction is that Channing was ahead, not only of his own time, but ours."

of Channing's engagement in social matters, to which I have now come. Differing in their details and manner of treatment, one and the same spirit breathes through both of these great expressions of Channing's interest in social and industrial reform. Nowhere does his characteristic faith in human nature lift itself into a purer air, or sing a braver song. That the ground of a man's culture lies in his nature, not in his calling, is the central note, and the first means of self-culture is the solemn and deliberate determination to make the most and the best of this nature. Men are not to cultivate themselves in order to be rich, but in order to be men. But while going far in the assertion of man's independence of his economical condition, Channing stopped short of recommending indifference to this. "Improve your lot," he said; "multiply comforts and, still more, get wealth, if you can, by honorable means, and if it does not cost too much . . . Only beware lest your motives sink as your condition improves." To the control of animal appetites he devoted some admirable pages, with the emphasis on temperance, and a stouter advocacy of prohibitory legislation than that of the great "Temperance" address. What he wrote of the choice of books is much more difficult of application now than it was then, but still "the few large stars" shed their unfailing light, and shame the fire-balloons that are distended only to collapse and leave no trace. We must let no book or man, he said, warp us from our own de-

liberate opinion. "Even the influence of superior minds may harm us by bowing us to servile acquiescence, and damping our spiritual activity." There are noble passages on a man's idealization of his work through its embodiment of justice and benevolence, every blow on the hot iron shaping not only that, but the workman's malleable soul. "It is strange," he said, "that laboring men do not think more of the vast usefulness of their toils." He found in party spirit one of the worst enemies of self-culture. His early hatred of this spirit was engendered in the fierce heats of Jeffersonian and Federalist recrimination, but it was conceived so rationally that it suffered no abatement in less stirring times. "Human nature," he said, "seems incapable of a stronger, more unrelenting passion. . . . Truth, justice, candor, fair dealing, sound judgment, self-control, and kind affections are its natural and perpetual prey." Concluding, he hailed, as the happiest feature of the age, the progress of the mass of the people in self-respect, intelligence, and all the comforts of life, while still only a beginning had been made on the right road.

The conclusion is not to be escaped that, as Channing drew on to the end of his career, his hopes for the improvement of society centred more in the poorer than in the better classes. As Paul turned to the Gentiles, so he to the wage-earners when he found the rich and cultured unable or unwilling to translate his spiritual message into the terms of social justice. It was with him and these

as with the prophet of old time and those to whom he preached in vain: "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words and they do them not." There was much complaint that he did not preach "personal religion" so much as formerly, but preached the need of social reformation more. Nor can it be denied that the pain and stress of this need were on him hard and sore. The accusation that he brought against the existing order was no mush of indeterminate words and phrases. "Society," he said, "has not gone forward as a whole. . . . The elevation of one part has been accompanied with the depression of the other. . . . Within the city walls which enclose the educated and refined, you meet a half-civilized horde, given up to deeper degradation than the inhabitants of the wilderness." He found the multitude "oppressed with drudging toil," that their labor was "a badge of inferiority," "that wealth forms a caste," that with the degradation of the laborer's condition, there was "degradation of mind and heart." He found "the great features of society hard and selfish," and Christianity "so at war with the present condition of society, that it can hardly be spoken and acted out without giving great offence." "The cry is," he wrote in 1835, "that 'property is insecure, law a rope of sand, and the mob sovereign.' The actual present evil, — the evil of that worship of property which stifles all the nobler sentiments,

and makes men property, — this, nobody sees: the appearances of approaching convulsions of property, — these shake the nerves of men who are willing that our moral evils should be perpetuated to the end of time, provided their treasures be untouched." On the other hand, his view of the distribution of property was optimistic even for the time when he accepted it; or, if it was not so, how remarkable, how incalculable, has been the change! "The vast and ever growing property of the country" he declared to be "diffused like the atmosphere." "The wealth of the rich is as a drop in the ocean; and it is a well-known fact that those men among us who are noted for their opulence exert hardly any political power." It is very different now, and it is interesting to imagine how Channing's powers of characterization and denunciation would have met a state of things like that which now prevails. His phrases do not seem inadequate to this state, and, coming upon them out of their connection, we might well imagine them intended to describe its arrogant prosperity over against the pitiful submergence of many millions of our civilized communities below the poverty line.[1]

The situation, as Channing conceived it, was quite bad enough, and his dealing with it frequently took on a revolutionary tone which would be accounted

[1] Some 7,000,000 in England and Wales, out of 25,000,000! We are doing better in America, but how much, and for how long? See B. S. Rowntree's *Study of Town Life*, 1901.

dangerous, if not anarchistic, by those of our own time who scent *lese majesté* in every honest criticism of public men and current policies. That lofty indignation of which Channing was so easily capable and which has been, not unfitly, called "the wrath of the lamb," found nowhere freer scope than here. To be surprised at Channing's capacity for it is simply not to know what manner of spirit he was of. The social-industrial status was for him frankly impossible: it must somehow be reformed. "Important changes must take place in the state of the laboring classes; they must share more largely in the fruits of their toil and in means of improvement." "I am a leveller; but I would accomplish my object by elevating the low, by raising from a degrading indigence and brutal ignorance the laboring multitude." He would do it with their help, mainly by that; not from above, but from beneath, the elevating power. The revolutionary bogy had no terrors for his mind. He was well over his misunderstanding of the French Revolution. He had come to know that it was worth all it cost; that the Terror was an incident of a great forward stride; that the ideas of '93 had fallen into the ground and died only to bear much fruit. The revolution of 1830 he hailed with pure delight. He had no patience with young Harvard's deadness to the event. "You seem to be the only young man that I know," said his young Harvard friend. "Always young for liberty!" he cried with passionate warmth. He car-

ried this spirit into the pulpit and fluttered the congregation with such manly utterance as this: "I see . . . in the revolutionary spirit of our times, the promise of a freer and higher action of the human mind, — the pledge of a state of society more fit to perfect human beings." Again, in the same discourse: "Men are now moved not merely by physical wants and sufferings, but by ideas, by principles, by the conception of a better state of society, under which the rights of human nature will be recognized and greater justice be done to the mind in all classes of the community." No wrongs done to the body appealed to him as did the starved and stunted mind. He declared that the old spells were broken, the old reliances gone. "Mightier powers than institutions have come into play among us, — the judgment, the opinions, the feelings of the many; and all hopes of stability which do not rest on the progress of the many must perish." "The present selfish dis-social system must give way." "No man has seized the grand peculiarity of the present age who does not see in it the means and material of a vast and beneficent social change; . . a mighty revolution not to stop until new ties shall have taken the place of those which have hitherto connected the human race." "I have no fear of revolutions. . . . What exists troubles me more than what is to come." "We must suffer and we ought to suffer. Society ought to be troubled, to be shaken, yea, convulsed, until its solemn debt to the poor and

ignorant is paid." It may be imagined that these dislocated sentences exaggerate Channing's reformatory, not to say revolutionary, spirit. On the contrary they minimize its force. They are much more impressive as they are carried along in the general stream of his discourse and ride its buoyant waves. The fact that they are taken from many different sources — sermons, letters, and addresses — proves that they signify no passing mood, but the continuous temper of his mind.

But although the word "revolution" did not impress Channing as too large a word, or too portentous, to express the measure and the quality of the social change which he felt must surely come to pass, and he contemplated the certain revolution as "silent or bloody," all the strength of his peace-loving nature and his peacemaking principles was on the side of a peaceful solution, if by any possibility that could be made to meet the exigency of the case. When in 1841 Orestes Brownson seemed to recommend an immediate death grapple of the rich and poor, Channing, who had deeply sympathized with his interest in the "masses," — "an odious word, as if spiritual beings could be lumped together like heaps of matter," — took grave offence and pronounced his article at once "shocking and absurd." On the other hand, he found nowhere so little ground for hope to build upon as "among what are called the 'better classes.' These are always selfishly timid, and never originate improvements worthy of the name." In their

"want of faith in improvement" he found "the darkest symptom" of the time, — "that frigid tameness of mind which confounds the actual and possible, which cannot burst the shackles of custom, which never kindles at the thought of great improvements of human nature, which is satisfied if religion receives an outward respect and never dreams of enthroning it in men's souls." To whom, then, should we go for the initial energy of the new social order? To those working, however humbly or obscurely, for "the spread of intellectual and moral power among all classes and the union of all by a spirit of brotherhood." Various forms of association and coöperation attracted him, as at least experiments that were well worth the trial. Among these were Brook Farm and the Mendon "Fraternal Community." He wrote to Adin Ballou,[1] the noble founder of "Hopedale," "I have for a very long time dreamed of an association in which the members, instead of preying on each other, . . . should live together as brothers, seeking one another's elevation and spiritual growth." At the same time he foresaw the difficulties which were developed at Hopedale, Brook Farm, in the North American Phalanx, and other similar experiments. "There is danger of losing in such establishments individuality, animation, force, and enlargement of mind." In the event those who were ground to-

[1] Rev. W. H. Fish, now extremely old, writes me of his visit to Channing at Newport and of Channing's enthusiastic sympathy with his interest in the Hopedale work.

gether in these social mills did more, perhaps, to sharpen each others' angles than to rub them down, but the associations withered as the individual was more and more. "One of my dearest ideas and hopes," he wrote, "is the union of *labor* and *culture*," and he found "Mr. Alcott, hiring himself out for day labor, and at the same time living in a region of high thought, the most interesting object in our commonwealth." He was more interesting than practical. "Orpheus in the 'Dial'" was really more effective than "Orpheus at the plough," if less to Channing's mind. The surmise of an unfriendly critic that Alcott's farming[1] would produce "very small potatoes" was more than justified on the material side. Yet such a failure was more honorable than some of our notorious successes.

Far more justly entertained than his interest in Mr. Alcott's transcendental farming was Channing's interest in his friend Tuckerman's Ministry at Large and the general work of the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches.[2] This work did not origi-

[1] For the best account of it see Louisa M. Alcott's *Transcendental Wild Oats.*

[2] See Channing's eulogy on Dr. Tuckerman in *Works*, and sketch, with contributory letters, in Sprague's *Unitarian Pulpit*, pp. 345–356. Born two years before Channing, he was his Harvard classmate and his most intimate friend after the college days, Jonathan Phillips possibly excepted. After a ministry of twenty-five years in Chelsea, he came to Boston, and found a place prepared for him by an "Association for Religious Improvement," which had originated in 1822, and had owed much to the fostering care of Henry Ware, Jr., of the Second Church. (See

nate with him, nor, strictly speaking, with Dr. Tuckerman, but it was Dr. Tuckerman who made it so efficient that it attracted wide attention both in this country and abroad, and furnished the inspiration and the power of the best work done for the elevation of the poor for a long time after Channing and Tuckerman had put off the encumbering frailty of the fleshly screen. The good work still goes on. Channing furnished a useful balance-wheel to Tuckerman's impulsive disposition. These met every week with Jonathan Phillips to talk over the work. Channing was not easily satisfied with its results. He wrote Dr. Tuckerman in 1835, "As yet, the ministry has done little for the poor and will do little, if managed on the old plan. . . . You have done good by approaching the poor with more sympathy and respect and more of the feeling of brotherhood than had been expressed before. . . . But what I want is that you should substitute for vague, conventional, hackneyed forms of speech, distinct, substantial truths, which the intellect may grasp and which answer to the profoundest wants of the spiritual nature. . . . If the ministry shall degenerate into a formal service or be carried on with no

Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Ministry at Large.) The birthday of the Ministry at Large was December 3, 1826, and Dr. Tuckerman was its most representative agent for the remainder of his life, though from 1833 onward his efficiency was much impaired by broken health. Born January 18, 1778, he died April 20, 1840, in Havana, whither he had gone in the vain hope of bettering his health.

more zeal than the common ministry, it will come to nothing."[1] Hence his interest in Brownson's "Society of Union and Progress" and his disappointment in its miscarriage. Hence his resolve, at one time, to establish a Free Church in which he might utilize his strength for the improvement of wage-earners and assist their mutual co-operation, but too little strength remained for such a task.

A sermon-pamphlet lies before me, browned with age and mildewed here and there. The sermon was preached by Dr. Tuckerman at the ordination of Messrs. Barnard and Gray, November 2, 1834. Dr. Francis Parkman, the clerical humorist, was among those who heard it, and after the service he said, "Brother Tuckerman, your sermon was too long. It tired me. Did n't it tire you, Dr. Channing?" Here was a net spread in sight of the bird, but the bird was not to be so easily ensnared. "*I* was tired," said Dr. Channing, "before Brother Tuckerman began."[2] The sermon required an hour and a half for its delivery, and covers

[1] *Memoir*, iii. 51. This passage will not be found in the one-volume edition, in which, quite unaccountably, ten pages of the earlier edition have been omitted preceding the letter to Dr. Follen, dated March 6, 1837, on page 481. There are many other omissions, some of them important, all unfortunate. See ii. 390–397; 400–402; 414, 415; 416–423; 425–431.

[2] He was not so tired *after* the sermon but that he could give a charge of one third its length, one of the strongest of a kind which reached its climax in his charge to Charles T. Brooks at Newport, and later, with some changes, to John S. Dwight at Northampton. See *Works*, one-volume edition, pp. 88, 283.

thirty-six octavo pages. But few sermons of that time were better justified in the demand they made upon the public mind. "It is difficult," says Dr. Francis G. Peabody, "to believe that this sermon was preached more than sixty years ago. It is a sermon for to-day, with a sense of modern problems and a note of modern interpretation." It is quite possible that some of its wisdom was of Dr. Channing's contribution, for just before its delivery he summoned Dr. Tuckerman for a good talk about his work, for the support of which the Benevolent Fraternity of Churches had just been organized. Nowhere does Channing's mind appear more soundly practical than in his formulation of his thought concerning this organization. He was strenuous for its subordination to the American Unitarian Association. He believed that a new life would be breathed into the Association by its consciousness of participation in so great a work. To those objecting that the new organization would acquire a sectarian character from its connection with the Unitarian Association he replied: —

I cannot consent to this view. I do not believe that we can or ought to act with other Christians in this cause. I earnestly desire to coöperate with them as far as possible. For example, when a particular vice, like intemperance, is to be warred against, we ought to join with them heart and hand. But when the object is to improve, elevate, the depressed classes of the community . . . then we must go to them with our distinctive views; not our theological dogmas, but our views of human

nature, of God's character, of the true perfection of man, etc., views as distinctive as those of the Trinitarians. In this work we ought not to be fettered by compromise with other sects.

If in this construction there was any defect of Channing's habitual liberality, we are assured by it, as we could hardly be in any other way, of that native centre of his thought to which he held fast as a ship to her sheet-anchor in the shouting gale. Fundamental to his social and religious life was his confidence in the dignity of human nature, the greatness of the soul, and the end of all his labor was a corresponding dignity of human character, intellectual, moral, and religious. Without that starting-point, he saw no way to reach this goal. Hence, a theology centering in a doctrine of man's total depravity was a complete disqualification for the work of social reformation in his eyes. If this was treason to his unsectarian liberality, those who objected might make the most of it. So help him God, he could no otherwise.

CHAPTER XI

THE OPEN MIND

CHANNING'S intellectual virtue was the most characteristic aspect of his life. Were it not for this, we might be tempted to embrace Dr. Andrew Peabody's opinion that his preëminence was solely that of his inclusive range. He was not saintlier than Gannett or Lowell or Ware, than Dr. Greenwood or Ephraim Peabody; he was far less scholarly than Norton; Buckminster was far more the great pulpit orator, gifted in face and form and voice as Channing never was; Ichabod Nichols, whose glory for the present generation has departed as if it had never been, was a flame of glowing eloquence quite equal to if not surpassing Channing's; in sheer intellectual force and philosophical acumen, Walker took easily a higher rank; of good pastors there were many more efficient, partly as having better health, and partly as being strong in social gifts and graces, where Channing was extremely weak, and caring more for people and persons than he did or could; small the minority of faithful antislavery witnesses, himself the judge,[1]

[1] "No sect in this country has taken less interest in the slavery question, or is more inclined to conservatism than our body." (Let-

among Unitarian preachers, and the social height from which it was projected gave to his testimony a peculiar force, but Samuel J. May and a few others were not inferior to him in their devotion to the hated cause. Dr. Peabody found the significance of Channing in his wide inclusion of the various abilities and gifts which had such vivid illustration in the several Unitarian ministers he named. It was here in part, no doubt, but more distinctly, I am persuaded, in an openness of mind which would have been remarkable in any time, and was preëminently so in a time so heavily weighted with authority and prescription as his own. Moreover, though there were as good men as Channing in his generation, there was no other for whom simple goodness loomed so vast on the horizon of his mind, as the highest common attribute of man and God.

A great many people in Channing's time had not so much as heard that there was any ethics of the intellect. It was his conception of this sphere that assigned to him his place in the Unitarian Controversy, that constituted his relation to the Unitarian body, that made him suspicious of all sects, that summoned him to the defence of intellectual rights, however jeoparded; that set a "frolic

ter to Blanco White, Sept. 18, 1839.) To this he added, April 13, 1840, "There are in the body individuals dissatisfied with the present condition, and anxious for higher manifestations of the truth and spirit of Christianity. The ministers deserve our great praise. They seem to me, as a body, remarkable for integrity, for the absence of intrigue, for superiority to all artifice."

welcome" in his eyes for all new thought, however unconventional its dress and speech. It dictated his letters of 1815; it flowered into the lyrical ardor of his "Spiritual Freedom;" it inspired the preface to his first volume of collected sermons and addresses; it made him "a party by himself" to those too resolutely bent on the sectarian organization of the New Movement; it elected him the champion of Abner Kneeland's right to print opinions which he (Channing) honestly abhorred; it inspired his hatred of proslavery mobs; it kept his own mind always fresh and growing, until death, coming untimely, found him

> Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
> Still clutching the inviolable shade,
> With a free, onward impulse.

There was no more schism in the line of Channing's evolution here than in his social interests; much less than in his antislavery development, which halted visibly between the Richmond lesson and that learned at St. Croix. He attained to liberality of temper while still semi-orthodox in thought. It was far less his intellectual, or even his moral, revulsion from Calvinism than his belief that new restraints were being forged for religious thought that carried him into the Unitarian Controversy. He so represented it in his famous preface of 1830, of which we have already taken cognizance; and he had anticipated this preface in substance, and even formally, in a sermon preached to his people on his return from Newport in 1827. With some

variation in the expression of his life purpose, his gravitation was habitual to the persuasion that intellectual freedom was the grand object of his best endeavors, both for himself and for his fellow men. There was nothing here to contravene his ethical passion. Without intellectual freedom there could be, he thought, no unretarded moral victory.

The first of the two great continuous sermons on Self-Denial anticipated much that was written on the same subject in the Fénelon article.[1] I am the proud possessor of the manuscript of this sermon, which I have always valued as one of Channing's greatest and best. Its strength is mainly spent in a rejection of the idea that we should "deny our reason." "Never," he said, "never do violence to your rational nature. He who in any case admits doctrines which contradict reason, has broken down the great barrier between truth and falsehood, and lays open his mind to every delu-

[1] The sermon was written in 1825, the article in 1829. On the back of the manuscript Channing inscribed the names of the places where it was preached. One of these is Lyons, N. Y., and thereby hangs a pretty tale. There was never any Unitarian church in Lyons. How, then, did Channing come to preach there? For answer I did not have to go farther than my own life of Sallie Holley, *A Life for Liberty*. Myron Holley, the father of Sallie, was a free-thinking person, and he held religious services in his parlor, himself doing the preaching. When Channing was on his way to Niagara, he persuaded him to stay in Lyons over Sunday and preach for him in a public hall. Sallie Holley, then a child of seven or eight summers, walked to the place of meeting with Channing, he holding all the way her hand in his, a never-to-be-forgotten sacrament. And now I know the very sermon that delighted Myron Holley's soul that day.

sion. . . . The truth is, and it ought not to be disguised, that our ultimate reliance is, and must be, on our own reason. Faith in this power lies at the foundation of all other faith. No trust can be placed in God if we discredit the faculty by which God is discerned. . . . Reason is the very faculty to which revelation is addressed." In this connection occurs one of the passages which has been double-starred by all those who value Channing's brave anticipation of the coming things. A thunderstorm (I have so read) can be compressed into a drop of dew. So in the clear transparency of this passage is gathered up the storm of May 19, 1841, when Theodore Parker's South Boston Sermon split the Unitarian house in twain.

> If, after a deliberate and impartial use of our best faculties, a professed revelation seems to us plainly to disagree with itself or to clash with great principles that we cannot question, we ought not to hesitate to withhold from it our belief. *I am surer that my rational nature is from God than that any book is the expression of his will.* This light in my own breast is his primary revelation, and all subsequent ones must accord with it, and are in fact intended to blend with and brighten it.

It is very interesting to find the sentence I have italicised abridged in the manuscript, thus: "I am surer, etc.," as if the rest were something that he knew by heart.

With this noble confidence in the sufficiency of reason he was extremely jealous of all limitations of the free use of reason imposed by creeds and

sects. Hostility to creeds was part of his inheritance from the eighteenth-century liberals. They were devout Scripturalists, and the ground of their objection to creeds was that only Scripture words were good enough to express scriptural thought. "Human creeds" was the formula of the liberal reproach. Channing entered cordially into this view, and it never lost its attraction for his mind, while yet, as time went on, other aspects became more prominent, especially the barrier offered by creeds to new invasions of ideas, and the temptation to insincerity involved in the conflict of the old creeds with the new light. The best expression of a distrust to which his writings furnish countless illustrations, is the article "On Creeds." It is part of a long letter which appeared in the "Christian Palladium" of February 14, 1837, and was addressed to the body of worshippers calling themselves "Christians." In so far as the letter is a criticism of their ways, it has too much of that *ex cathedra* tone into which Channing sometimes fell. The part on creeds is better than the whole. He complained that they separated men from Christ; that the churches drowned his voice with the clatter of their articles. The believer is told to listen to Christ, but also told that "he will be damned if he receive any lessons but such as are taught in the creed."

I cannot but look on human creeds with feelings approaching contempt. When I bring them into contrast with the New Testament, into what insignificance

do they sink! What are they? Skeletons, freezing abstractions, metaphysical expressions of unintelligible dogmas; and these I am to regard as the expositions of the fresh, living, infinite truth which came from Jesus! . . . I learn less of Jesus by this process than I should learn of the sun by being told that this glorious luminary is a circle about a foot in diameter. . . . Christian truth is infinite. Who can think of shutting it up in the few lines of an abstract creed? You might as well compress the boundless atmosphere, the all-pervading light, the free winds of the universe into separate parcels, and weigh and label them, as break up Christianity into a few propositions. Christianity is freer, more illimitable than the light or the winds. . . . It is a spirit rather than a rigid doctrine, the spirit of boundless love. . . . Who does not see that human creeds, setting bounds to thought and telling us where all inquiry must stop, tend to repress this holy zeal [for Christian truth], to shut our eyes on new illumination, to hem us within beaten paths of man's construction, to arrest that perpetual progress which is the life and glory of an immortal mind?

Doubtless the following words were pertinent when they were written; but where hundreds then could feel their personal application, thousands can do so now: —

If new ideas spring up in the mind, not altogether consonant with what the creed-monger has established, he must cover them with misty language. If he happen to doubt the language of his church, he must strain its phraseology, must force it beyond its obvious import, that he may give assent to it without departures from truth. All these processes must have a blighting effect upon the mind and heart. They impair self-respect.

They cloud the intellectual eye. They accustom men to tamper with the truth. In proportion as a man dilutes his thought and suppresses his conviction, to save his orthodoxy from suspicion, in proportion as he borrows his words from others, instead of speaking in his own tongue; in proportion as he distorts language from its common use, that he may stand well with his party; in that proportion he clouds and degrades his intellect, as well as undermines the manliness and integrity of his character. How deeply do I commiserate the minister, who, in the warmth and freshness of his youth, is visited with glimpses of higher truth than is embodied in the creed, but who dares not be just to himself, and is made to echo what is not the simple, natural expression of his own mind! . . . Better for a minister to preach in barns, or in the open air, where he may speak the truth with the fulness of his soul, than to lift up in cathedrals, amidst pomp and wealth, a voice which is not true to his inward thought. If they who know the chains of creeds once knew the happiness of breathing the air of freedom and of moving with an unincumbered spirit, no wealth or power in the world's gift would bribe them to part with their spiritual liberty.

The sect was for Channing only the creed organized and personalized, and while he did as much as any to effect the Unitarian differentiation, and was one of the first cheerfully to accept the Unitarian name for himself and those sharing his beliefs and principles, his satisfaction with the Unitarian fellowship was always in proportion to its worthiness to bear the title given to it by Dr. Kirkland, "the Unsectarian Sect." If the form of the body was necessarily sectarian, so much the

more earnest must it be to prove its unsectarian spirit, its free assent to truth wherever found, its cordial recognition of Christian character in association with whatever form of thought. "Think no man the better, no man the worse, for the church he belongs to." "On sects, and on the spirit of sects, I must be allowed to look with grief, shame, pity — I had almost said contempt." Of all human history he found that of the Christian sects to be the most painful and humiliating.

> An enemy to every religion, if asked to describe a Christian, would, with some show of reason, depict him as an idolater of his own distinguishing opinions, covered with badges of party, shutting his eyes to the virtues and his ears to the arguments of his opponents, arrogating all excellence to his own sect, all saving power to his own creed, sheltering under the name of pious zeal the love of domination, the conceit of infallibility, and the spirit of intolerance, and trampling on men's rights under the pretence of saving their souls. . . . We see Christians denouncing and excommunicating one another for supposed error, until every denomination has been pronounced accursed by some portion of the Christian world; so that were the curses of men to prevail not one human being would enter heaven.

In the spirit of these judgments he sustained a relation to the Unitarian body that attracted to him the sympathy of many Unitarians, the doubts of many more. It might be difficult to bring all his utterances on this subject into an appearance of entire consistency. They reflected different stages of his experience, different moods of his

mind, different aspects of the Unitarian development. He found much to praise in this and some things to condemn. Especially, as he grew older in years and younger in spirit, he found himself out of sympathy with Unitarians whose conservative temper made them suspicious of all change. But, again, some of the more conservative were less sectarian than some others, and so grappled him with hoops of steel. Octavius Frothingham, in his "Boston Unitarianism," finds the later Channing hardly more a representative Boston Unitarian than young Theodore Parker, who hailed Channing as the head of a new Unitarianism, the old having no head. In a great sermon of 1828 Channing stated his position in terms that would have required little, if any, modification at any subsequent period: —

I indeed take cheerfully the name of a Unitarian, because unwearied efforts are used to raise against it a popular cry; and I have not so learned Christ as to shrink from reproaches cast on what I deem his truth. Were the name more honored I should be glad to throw it off; for I fear the shackles which a party connection imposes. I wish to regard myself as belonging not to a sect, but to the community of free minds, of lovers of truth, of followers of Christ, both on earth and in heaven. I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky, in the broad light, looking far and wide, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears, and following Truth meekly but resolutely, however arduous or solitary be the path in which she leads. I am, then, no organ of a sect, but speak from myself alone.

In the same spirit we find him writing Rev. J. H. Thom of Liverpool, after reading the volume of "Liverpool Lectures," in which Thom, Martineau, and Henry Giles had made a splendid defence of Unitarianism from a line much more advanced than that of the earlier apologists: —

I was glad you did not undertake to defend any Unitarianism but your own. I know that in this way the benefit of authority is lost, and the unity of the sect is threatened; but what unity is of any worth, except the attraction subsisting among those who hold, not nominally, but really, not in word, but with profound conviction and love, the same great truths? I see in these Lectures the signs of a freer discussion than we have yet had. . . . It is no easy thing to let the [New Testament] records speak for themselves, to take them as we find them, to let them say what will injure their authority in the present state of men's minds.

Of his later inclination to a humanitarian view of Jesus, which eventually brought him to this view, there are many intimations, more particularly in his letters. The letter just quoted has an important one which cannot but remind us of Emerson's regret of the "noxious exaggeration of the person of Jesus." Channing wrote: —

We are more and more, and very properly, inclined to rest Christianity on the character, the spirit, the divine elevation of Jesus Christ, and the tendency of this is to beget a swollen way of speaking about him and his virtues, very inconsistent with the simple beauty and majesty of his character, and which is fitted to throw a glare over him, and not to present that distinct appre-

hension of him so necessary to a quickening and transforming love. It is an age of swelling words. I must plead guilty myself, and I am not sure that the Lectures are free from the offence.

A few months later, September 10, 1841, he wrote to James Martineau, then preaching at Liverpool, and thirty-six years old: —

Old Unitarianism must undergo important modification or developments. Thus I have felt for years. Though an advance on previous systems, and bearing some better fruits, it does not work deeply, it does not strike living springs in the soul. This is perfectly consistent with the profound piety of individuals of the body. But it cannot quicken and regenerate the world, no matter how reasonable it may be, if it is without *power*. Its history is singular. It began as a protest against the rejection of reason, — against mental slavery. It pledged itself to progress, as its life and end; but it has gradually grown stationary, and now we have a *Unitarian orthodoxy*. Perhaps this is not to be wondered at or deplored, for all reforming bodies seem doomed to stop, in order to keep the ground, much or little, which they have gained. They become conservative, and out of them must spring new reformers, to be persecuted generally by the old. With these views, I watch all new movements with great interest.

To a friendly correspondent who had written him that Unitarians might make "many concessions" to the Trinitarians, he wrote: —

It is true I might adopt much of the Trinitarian language, not only on the Trinity, but the Atonement. I could say that Christ died to magnify the law, to satisfy

Divine justice, and that God cannot forgive without manifesting displeasure at sin. But I cannot think with Talleyrand, that "the use of language is to hide our thoughts." Such approximations to those from whom we really differ seem to me to put in peril our "simplicity and godly sincerity." I know not where they will stop. They also obstruct the spirit of truth to which every Christian must be willing to be a martyr. Still more, the usurpation which demands such concessions is a wrong to our common Lord and Master, and to the human mind, which must not be debarred from seeking truth and giving utterance to its deep convictions. In saying this I do not speak as a Unitarian, but as an independent Christian. I have little or no interest in Unitarians *as a sect*. I have hardly anything to do with them. I can endure no sectarian bonds.

This letter should make it sufficiently plain that his great, and perhaps growing, fear that the Unitarian body would be captured by the sectarian spirit, involved no least distrust of Unitarian opinions as differing from those of the traditional theology. But some of its expressions have been exploited for much more than they are worth, with a view to exhibit Channing as reacting from Unitarian to orthodox opinions. Another letter has more frequently been put to the same use. It was written to a Welsh or Irish Methodist, in 1841, and said: —

I distrust sectarian influence more and more. I am more detached from a denomination and strive to feel more my connection with the universal Church, — with all good and holy men. I am little of a Unitarian, have

little sympathy with the system of Priestley and Belsham,[1] and stand aloof from all but those who strive and pray for clearer light, who look for a purer and more effectual manifestation of Christian truth.

This letter is explained in part, and mainly, by Channing's unsectarian spirit, but in part also by the fact that he was writing to a correspondent to whom Unitarianism meant exclusively the system of Priestley and Belsham, with which, because of its necessarian and materialistic elements, Channing had "less sympathy than with many of the 'orthodox.'" In other letters to correspondents in Great Britain, he will be found adapting himself to the foreign use of terms. So far was he from reacting towards orthodoxy that it was, as we have seen, "Unitarian orthodoxy" that excited his disapprobation. It was because the Unitarians were not far enough from their traditional moorings, not because they were too far, that he visited on them his displeasure and distrust.

James Martineau contributed a similar problem to the gayety of nations. He was avowedly a Unitarian in his personal belief, but he did not believe in any doctrinal basis of religious organization, and, consequently, would not connect himself with any organization, local or general, calling itself Unitarian. Channing's construction was much less severe. He was as frankly and clearly

[1] The second clause of this sentence, "have . . . Belsham," is clearly meant for a restatement of the first, "I . . . Unitarian."

Unitarian in his personal opinions as it was possible for him to be, and his divergence from the traditional orthodoxy increased as he went on. Moreover, he was from its beginning a member of the Unitarian Association, would have been its first president but for his miserable health, and was a member of its official board. But he feared the tendency, real or imaginary, of the new denomination to become a sect in the opprobrious sense which was so hateful to his mind, and in proportion as he discovered, or thought he discovered, signs of this tendency, his interest in organized Unitarianism waned, waxing again at the first sign of devotion to his ideal ends.

It is, however, necessary to remark that the less favorable criticisms in the above letters were all included in the closing period of his life, — its last two or three years. In the early thirties he cherished a more hopeful view. Sending his book of 1830 to the Baron de Gerando, he said: "I ought to observe, however, that what is here called Unitarianism, a very inadequate name, is characterized by nothing more than by the spirit of freedom and individuality. It has no established creed or symbol. Its friends think each for himself, and differ much from each other; so that my book, after all, will give you my mind rather than the dogmas of a sect." Similarly, in a letter of 1834, to Dr. Lant Carpenter, writing of his "two excellent friends," Phillips and Tuckerman, he says: "Perhaps these gentlemen have enabled you to

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understand American Unitarianism better than you did before. They are fair specimens of our body in one respect. I think you must have been struck with the entire absence of a *sectarian spirit* in their habits of feeling and thinking, and it seems to me that, with our many and great deficiencies, we may be said to be characterized by this feature. We look at Christianity very much as if no sect existed, and do not exaggerate the importance of certain doctrines because they distinguish us from others." It was a growing sense of disappointment as to these particulars, and, with this, the growth of what Channing called a "Unitarian orthodoxy," that tinged his later criticisms of the Unitarians with reprehension and regret. When these criticisms were written he had heard the Unitarian denunciation of Furness's "Notes on the Gospels" and "Biography of Jesus," the outcry against Emerson's Divinity School Address and Parker's South Boston Sermon. He had, moreover, found little sympathy with his antislavery ideas and purposes among his ministerial brethren, and the indifference and opposition of his own people had cut him to the heart. Then, too, it should always be remembered that he brought to the searching of the Unitarian spirit an individualism as aloof as Emerson's from all organized activity. If the Abolitionists had not been so effectually organized, the harshness of their arraignment would not have kept him from their fellowship.

I find no first-hand expression [1] of Channing's sentiments with regard to Emerson's withdrawal from his Boston pulpit in 1832 because of his conscientious inability to administer the Lord's Supper, but ten years later he met a similar situation with a simplicity that left nothing to desire. Frederic Augustus Eustis, a recent graduate of the Harvard Divinity School, would have commemorated the death of Jesus without the customary bread and wine; whereupon his church was denied the assistance it would otherwise have received and he was refused ordination.[2] "Have we here," asked Channing, "no proof that the Unitarian body is forsaking 'its first love'? . . . Must our brethren be taught that on this point they must think and practice as we do or forfeit our sympathy? Is this a ground on which to run up a wall of partition? Is this to be made a denominational fence by the friends of free inquiry? . . . We prove ourselves 'carnal,' outward, earthly, unspiritual, and sectarian, when, for such cause, we deny sympathy and aid to single-hearted, earnest brethren, who are laboring to 'hold fast the light' under great discouragements amidst the darkness of antiquated, intolerant systems of theo-

[1] But Miss Peabody remembers "his having expressed great personal respect for Mr. Emerson's severe sincerity and moral independence in relinquishing the pulpit of the North Church."

[2] He never was ordained, but he fully justified Channing's confidence when he went, among the first, to the Sea Islands on the Carolina coast, to teach and guide the contrabands in their "bewildering freedom." He married Channing's daughter, Mary.

logy." After this, May 11, 1842, we have not another utterance from Channing in the interests of religious liberty of equal significance. He could not have ended on a clearer note, nor on one more disconcerting to those who would like to believe that he returned again to the place from which he set out.

One episode of Channing's later life put to the proof the reality of his convictions concerning the practical limits of religious liberty. It is to the case of Abner Kneeland that I refer. This gentleman, who had been an orthodox, and then a Universalist, preacher, was now the editor of "The Investigator," a sheet which renewed from week to week the critical manners of Thomas Paine, but had parted company with his belief in God. In January, 1834, he was indicted for blasphemy under three heads, — he had quoted a scurrilous passage from Voltaire touching the virgin-birth of Jesus; he had published an article affirming the absurdity of prayer; he had said in a public letter in his paper, "Universalists believe in a God, which I do not, but believe that their god, with all his moral attributes (aside from nature itself), is nothing more than a chimera of their own imagination." The case dragged its slow length along for several years. The prosecuting attorney was the same James T. Austin who won imperishable renown at the Lovejoy meeting. In 1838 Kneeland was finally sentenced to two months' imprisonment for having, in the language of the judge, ad-

dressed to the jury, "wilfully denied the existence of God." Ellis Gray Loring, foremost in all good works, and among Channing's instigators to his braver things, prepared a petition to the governor asking that Kneeland's sentence be remitted. The petition (revised by Dr. Channing) was an admirable statement of the reasons why the publication of atheistical opinions should not be punished as a crime. It was signed by one hundred and sixty-seven persons, and Dr. Channing's name led all the rest. It provoked bitter attack and a counter-petition which made the governor's path of duty plain, and Kneeland's sentence was served out. Channing, of course, was held responsible, not only for Kneeland's atheism, but for the scurrility he had quoted from Voltaire. But none of these things moved him from his confidence in the essential justice and wisdom of his course. It can easily be imagined what a grief it was to some of Channing's people to have him, not only mixed up in such a business, but choosing for himself the leading part. On the other hand, he must have had the satisfaction of seeing many of their names in the list following his own.

Attorney-General Austin's scent for heresy was so keen that in 1834 this devout Unitarian set his heart on the public prosecution of Rev. George R. Noyes for denying the New Testament fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. This he had done in an "Examiner" article reviewing Hengstenberg's opinions. Either the indictment was quashed

or the due process of law suffered some other equally efficient check. This incident, which must have interested Channing profoundly, left no trace upon his letters that is now discernible. Mr. Noyes was then a young minister at Petersham, Mass.; it was not until 1840 that he became a professor in the Harvard Divinity School. His appointment was a sign that the argument from prophecy for the supernatural character of Christianity had broken down. For the early Christians, it was the main argument; in the eighteenth-century conflict of the Christian apologists with the Deists, it was of equal if not greater prominence than the argument from miracles. It has now few to do it reverence. If any one has lingering doubts he should read Kuenen's convincing "Prophets and Prophecy in Israel." Beginning with the views generally acceptable to both the orthodox and the liberal parties, Channing finally arrived at Dr. Noyes's view[1] of no literal fulfilments, together with the view of the new orthodoxy that the spirit of the Old Testament prophets was prophetic, and dynamically so, of the New Testament religion.

Channing's relations with John Pierpont in Pierpont's painful conflict with the distillers and rum-

[1] By which he was probably much impressed, for the *Examiner* article was a weighty and careful piece of work. He begged Mr. Noyes to come and see him. He went, expecting to hear much wisdom. But Dr. Channing's part of the conversation was a long series of searching questions, in the Socratic manner. I had this from Dr. Noyes in my Divinity School days. I can hear the sharp crack of his laugh, as I recall the place and talk.

sellers of his congregation were of a piece with his open sympathy with all ministers of religion who, not content with exalting the beauties of "personal religion," were resolved to bring their Christian principles to bear on public interests and social crimes.[1] He wrote to Pierpont in his most perilous hour, "Sir, should this struggle in your society result in some ten or a dozen of your most active opponents withdrawing from your church, and in others who sympathize with you and sustain your course, taking their places, Hollis Street pulpit will stand the highest in the city." This apostrophe was not a little weakened by the second clause. To drive out the traffickers, to purify the temple, was sufficient honor. In this incident Channing saw, beyond the obvious, concrete effect, its illustration of far-reaching tendencies. "It was very clear to him," says his nephew, "that the danger was pressing of a complete subserviency of politics, the press, public opinion, and the pulpit, to the insidious tyranny of wealth." If the green tree impressed him so, what would he now think of the dry? One of our new writers does not much exaggerate, if any, when he says that the seat of government is only nominally at Washington; that our real governors are those controlling our great corporate interests. Channing's forecast was in

[1] It is related of Dr. James Walker that his confinement of his calling to the sphere of "personal religion" was so close that he did not permit himself to *vote*, fearing that such political action would infect the simplicity of his office with a grievous taint.

no particular more just than when it troubled him with visions of these things. He was a Cassandra to his generation: his prophecy was not believed. It would not be, if uttered now. But that they were not believed was not the only peculiarity of Cassandra's prophecies; another was that they were justified by the event.

In no respect did Channing make better proof of open-mindedness than in his relations with the younger men who from 1830 to 1840 were striking out upon new paths, and his relations to the new movements, social and religious, which at that time were springing into manifold and hopeful life. Like Franklin, he would fain have lived to enjoy the fuller vision of the coming times. His "enthusiasm of hope" was to him "the evidence of things not seen," but not the "substance" that he craved. "You young thinkers," he said, "have the advantage over us in coming to the words of Scripture without superstitious preoccupation, and are more likely to get the obvious meaning. *We* shall walk in shadows to our graves." But he did his best to dissipate the shadows, not only here, but in all his mental processes. "It is a good plan," he wrote, "ever and anon to make a clean sweep of that to which we have arrived by logical thought, and take a new view; for the mind needs the baptism of wonder and hope to keep it vigorous and healthy for intuition." Again he wrote, "I owe the little that I am to the conscientiousness with which I have listened to objections springing

up in my own mind to what I have inclined and sometimes thirsted to believe, and I have attained through this to a serenity of faith that once seemed denied in the present state." It was in the spirit of these various expressions that he met the bearers of new light, making no base surrender of his long cherished opinions, but bringing them patiently to the test of such as seemed fairly to challenge them.

Orestes A. Brownson was a thinker whose intellectual proportions have, perhaps, been obscured for us by his perpetual motion from one point of belief to another. His religious consciousness was a dissolving view, and those who have read the three big octavos that repeat the story of his changeful life need not be told that its essential restlessness did not cease when, in 1845, he joined the Roman church. He was bound to be a free-thinker, whether as Unitarian or Roman Catholic; and when the Roman Curia took offence, he kissed the rod, and sinned no more — till the next time. He described himself as having, at one time or another, accepted and vindicated nearly every error into which the human mind had ever fallen. From his early Presbyterianism he passed to Universalism, and then quite beyond the Christian pale, engaging with Robert Owen and Fanny Wright in their schemes of social regeneration. About 1832, Channing's "Likeness to God" appealed to him so powerfully that following up its lead, he became a Unitarian, and the minister of a Unitarian church. As an enthusiastic convert, but more as

an apt student and interpreter of Jouffroy and Cousin, and especially because of his desire to bring home his new gospel to the poorer people of Boston, Channing was deeply interested in him and in his "Society for Christian Union and Progress," to which he preached from 1836 to 1843. But his polemical temper was not at all to Channing's mind, and some of his rasher utterances gave Channing's waning confidence a serious check.

Dr. Furness had a strong personal attraction for Channing, who welcomed his "Notes on the Gospels" as containing "the best biblical criticism he had ever seen," but did not find his naturalistic explanation of the miracles satisfactory, or even well supported. On the other hand, the concession to the sensible miracle in Martineau's "Rationale of Religious Inquiry" seemed to him "a jump backwards" from his (Martineau's) claim for intuitive inspiration. Without ever abandoning the New Testament miracles, Channing completely reversed the traditional view, holding them as substantiated by the truth of Christianity, and not as substantiating it. "Sartor Resartus" took him completely by storm, "not as giving him new ideas, but as a quickener of *all* his ideas," its perfectly original way of expressing spiritual truth. When the "Dial" began to count the hours of the new day, Channing was at first very hopeful, but afterward, like Parker, disappointed. He had great confidence in Henry Hedge's character and culture, and

wished he might see more of him. For another enterprise with which George Ripley was identified, — its inspiring soul, — Channing's hopes were not extravagant, yet very high. I mean Brook Farm. He distrusted absolutely the competitive system of trade, and doubted a man's ability to engage in it without loss of personal integrity. But what attracted him most to Brook Farm was the promise it held out of a blend of intellectual and manual labor. For all his hesitations with the Abolitionists, he found, in 1841, "but one decided step towards a higher practical manifestation of Christianity, and that is *Abolition*." Then he remembered the Adin Ballou community, and added, "I look to *that* with a good deal of hope." But that Brook Farm was then hardly begun, he would have added that also. "I never hoped," he said, "so strongly and so patiently." The Chardon Street Convention, that astonishing aggregation of reformers and fanatics which Emerson described with equal sympathy and humor in the "Dial," found Channing there to listen, if he could not approve the general drift, and quite unscared. Some resented a moderator as an infringement of their perfect liberty, but a wiser sentiment prevailed. He could hope more from the soil that yielded such vagaries than from Beacon Street respectability. "Nothing," he said, "terrifies me in these wildest movements. What has for years terrified and discouraged me is *apathy*."

Between him and Emerson there was always

mutual appreciation. "In our wantonness," said Emerson, "we often flout Dr. Channing, and say he is getting old; but as soon as he is ill, we remember he is our bishop, and that we have not done with him yet." Channing's deafness kept him from Emerson's early Boston lectures, but Channing's daughter heard them with great joy, and Emerson graciously lent her his manuscripts to read to her father, whose own idealism and individualism responded heartily to their main intent. For his opinion of Emerson's Divinity School Address, of July 15, 1838, which we now rank with Channing's Baltimore and Parker's South Boston Sermon as the second part of the great trilogy of liberal religion, we are indebted solely to Miss Peabody's recollections and notes made at the time. The main impression is of the extraordinary meekness and patience with which he submitted to her long drawn series of questions. Those who have fancied in him an attitude of intellectual superiority should read this "diligent inquisition," and also how he once read a sermon to Mr. Norton for his critical opinion, which, to Dr. Follen, who was present, seemed like "sacrilegious ice" on Channing's fervent heat. What emerges from Miss Peabody's report is that Channing found himself in essential agreement with the Address, but deprecated its indifference to the miracles and other facts of the New Testament narration. He thought Henry Ware fighting a shadow when contending against Emerson's denial of the personality

of God. Channing found personality in the Address. He thought, considering on what basis the Divinity School was founded, that Mr. Emerson would have been more courteous if he had given the Address elsewhere. Miss Peabody told him of her begging Emerson to print "Friend" in "friend of souls," describing Jesus, and how Emerson said, "No, if I do that, they will all go to sleep;" to which Channing smiled and said, "To purify men's love of Jesus, it may be in some instances desirable not to think of his individuality. Perhaps Jesus meant to express this when he said to his personal disciples, 'It is expedient that I go away from you. Unless I go away, the Comforter, *which is the Spirit of Truth*, cannot come.'"[1]

When in 1841 James Freeman Clarke returned from Kentucky, where he had made his "Western Messenger" the organ of Channing's antislavery opinions and started Emerson's "Humble-Bee" on its long upward flight, he went about to form a society in Boston on original lines. Its support was to be voluntary, its worship congregational, — the people sharing in the hymns and prayers, —

[1] One often feels that Miss Peabody mixes herself unduly with what she professes to report, and I have followed her only to the extent of her evident congruity with Channing as directly known. I have been surprised to find how large was W. H. Channing's unacknowledged debt to her journal in the *Memoir*. Miss Peabody published her *Reminiscences* in 1880, thirty-two years after the *Memoir*. If but an indifferent Boswell, we cannot be too grateful for the words and traits she has preserved. Moreover, the impregnable rock of Channing's letters crops through in many places.

the method social; that is, there were to be frequent meetings for conversation on subjects of vital interest. The programme sounds innocent enough, but to the average Boston temper of the time it was a daring innovation. To Dr. Channing it opened a prospect that delighted him. He welcomed Mr. Clarke to frequent consultations as to the best ways and means. He encouraged his Federal Street parishioners and members of his family, his brothers and his son, to become members of the new society. When the question was a declaration of faith, it was Channing who took the larger and more spiritual view. Mr. Clarke's formula was "Our faith is in Jesus, as the Christ, the Son of God;" Channing preferred "in Jesus as the divinely appointed teacher of truth." "He said," wrote Mr. Clarke, "that the danger would be a tendency to conform to the old established ways, as the mass exerted a great power of attraction. He said again, emphatically, that we must be more afraid of formality than of eccentricity."

One of the attractions of the West Roxbury parish for Theodore Parker in 1837 was that Dr. Channing would be near for counsel and encouragement, and the event fully justified his hope. He made daring inroads upon Channing's isolation, but was always cordially received. They discussed "conscience," and Channing's was the more modern, scientific view. They talked over Strauss's "Life of Jesus," which Parker reviewed for the "Examiner" with more smartness than apprecia-

tion, and Channing "observed very archly that he should not be *very* sorry if some of Kneeland's followers would do it into English," a sentiment that should afford a moment of refreshment to those whom Channing's moral elevation tires. Parker was convinced that a young man with Channing's liberal opinions and reformatory spirit "could not find a place for the sole of his foot in Boston, though half a dozen pulpits were vacant." But Parker's South Boston Sermon did quite as much to set the edge of Channing's Christian supernaturalism as to prove his sympathy with courageous thought. He wrote, —

> The great idea of the discourse — the immutableness of Christian truth — I respond to entirely, and I was moved by Parker's heartfelt utterance of it. Still there was a good deal in the sermon I did not respond to. I grieved that he did not give some clear, distinct expression of his belief in the Christian miracles. . . . I see not how the rejection of these can be separated from the rejection of Jesus Christ. Without them he becomes a mere fable; for nothing is plainer than that from the beginning miracles constituted his history. . . . Without miracles the historical Christ is gone. . . . In regard to miracles I never had the least difficulty. The grand miracle is the perfect, divine *character* of Jesus. . . . He was the *sinless* and *spotless* Son of God, distinguished from all men by that infinite peculiarity, freedom from moral evil.

In his next following letter Channing made the necessary criticism on this view of the miraculous sinlessness of Jesus: "Though he came to be an

example, yet in the points in which we so much need an example, — in our conflict with inward evil, in our approach to God as sinners, in penitence and self-purification, — *he wholly fails us.*" He certainly does if his perfection was miraculous. But Channing goes on to say that "*the formation of his character*, though wholly unknown to us, was wholly free." Here is a tangled web of various inconsistencies. If we know nothing of the formation of Jesus' character, how can we know that it was wholly free? And, if it was wholly free, how does the example fail? And why should the unique *result* be regarded as miraculous, if the *process* was wholly natural? Channing was wiser in his spontaneous utterance than in his more deliberate speech. What a man cannot help saying is the right measure of his thought. And Channing could not help saying that Christ's character was imitable both in its process and result. Hence his great sermon on the imitableness of Christ's character, his great doctrine that all minds are of one family, and a hundred similar things. In the very letter I have quoted, he glides into his deeper mood by irresistible attraction: "To my mind he [Jesus] was intended to be an anticipation of the perfection to which we are guided, to reveal to us what is in germ in all souls." "As to Mr. Parker," he said, "I wish him to preach what he thoroughly believes and feels. I trust the account you received of attempts to *put him down* was in the main a fiction. Let the full heart pour itself forth!

. . . I honor his virtues, and I earnestly desire for him that illumination which will make him an unmixed blessing to his fellow creatures." It was a great misfortune for Parker and the Unitarians that Channing did not live to see his (Parker's) controversy with them come full circle. Surely his benign influence on those engaged in that controversy would have been an inestimable boon.

To those well acquainted with the course of Channing's life and mind, many illustrations of his open-mindedness will occur which I have not set down. To take some and leave others was made compulsory for me by the limitations of my space. For they are not here or there, but everywhere in his sermons, letters, talk. The style, in this sort, was the man. I do not know of any one to whom we can go with better certainty of encountering a mind so open to all truth, so cordial with all honest thought and generous action, that it is a perpetual invitation to the communion of that church which is transcendant of all sectarian divisions, — the most petty, and those of deeper grain which break up the unity of religion into the great religions of the world.

CHAPTER XII

THE PERSONAL ASPECT

As Channing's life drew past its mid-career, and stretched forward to the untimely close, the look of Allston's picture gradually faded from his face and made way for those stronger features and those deeper lines which are preserved for us in the admirable portrait by Gambardella, painted in 1839. The deepening hollows in the cheeks made the cheekbones more prominent and threw the good straight nose into more sharp relief, while the increasing pallor of his countenance gave the large sunken eyes even a more wonderful expressiveness than that of their earlier light. The sick look hovered most about the mouth, qualifying its natural firmness with tremulous and pathetic lines. Matter of fact people called this face emaciated and cadaverous; the more poetic fancied an attenuation of the bodily substance that revealed a spiritual presence with the least possible obstruction.

Those who had known Channing only by hearsay or his books, when they first met him or saw him, were surprised, if not disappointed, to find the physical man so incommensurate with his spir-

itual mate. "What!" cried a big foreign admirer, meeting him on the threshold of a friend's house at Portsmouth, and holding out his arms as if expecting Channing to run into them, "What! The gr-r-reat Dr. Channing!" A better known story is that of the Kentuckian who, when told how slightly he was built, could not believe the report. "Dr. Channing small and weak!" he cried; "I thought him six feet at least, with fresh cheeks, broad chest, a voice like that of many waters, and strong-limbed as a giant." There was less and less sign of the sick man in the printed and the spoken word as time went on and the sickness actually increased. And somehow the informing soul habitually triumphed over its frail tenement, and gave assurance of abundant strength. "He was a man of delicate frame," said Dr. Dewey, "but of a great presence."

The catalogue of his infirmities is a long and weary one, and, if he had been as watchful of his sensations as some of our later literary invalids, his memoirs would have been mainly pathological. Dyspepsia, lassitude, insomnia, nervous excitement, and depression were the peculiar notes that were repeated endlessly in various combinations. A good night's sleep was something calling for special thankfulness. The sermon that was a delight in the preaching set his pulse flying and put brain and stomach out of gear. Greater exertions had to be paid for in the coin of many sleepless nights. In 1826 he writes, "I know not when I have been

so well as now, but I am not sanguine. Life and health are most uncertain. But I am not the less grateful for a bright and vigorous day because it gives no pledge of many such to come. The very feeling of the uncertainty of life increases its value. I certainly do enjoy it highly." . . . In 1827, "I have borne so long the burden of that half-health, which makes a man unable to say whether he is sick or well, and which restrains all the soarings and continued efforts of the mind, that I earnestly desire some release from it." Once he writes (1831), "I have experienced during this depression of the body, what I have sometimes known before, — a singular brightness and clearness of mind on the most interesting subjects. . . . May it not be that, in this depression of the animal life, the mind is more free from the influence of matter, is more itself, and gives us some earnest of what it is to be?" But he did not often lay this flattering unction to his soul. He had got well past the "spite of this flesh" asceticism of his youth, and looked to his best health for his happiest inspirations. As early as 1830 he ceased to hope for any permanent improvement. "In another world I trust that I shall renovate my youth; but for the present I must try to keep a sound mind in a weak body." His steady purpose was to husband his resources. To some he seemed to be always carrying himself on a pillow, and perhaps less babying would have been better, but he certainly did not "enjoy bad health," and his self-tending

was the best trap he could devise to catch a few more working hours. Dr. Dewey says that from motives of prudence he sometimes changed one coat for another five or six times a day. A robust satirist said that he had a different wrap for every point of the compass, and I can testify that they were many, judging from that variety which I have seen, almost too sacred for my touch. But then it should be remembered that his walks often took him past that corner where Thomas G. Appleton advised that a shorn lamb be tied, so that passers-by might get the benefit of the attempered wind. "Why do you not go out, sir, and take a walk?" said a parishioner who found him miserable and depressed. Channing pointed a tragic finger to the vane of Park Street Church and said, "Do you see that?" "Yes," answered the parishioner, "I see it, and it has been stuck fast and pointing north-east for a fortnight." Then Channing sallied out and found the warm south wind turning the Common green.

The Newport summers lengthened out until each took nearly half the year, and even when in Boston Dr. Channing's appearance in his own pulpit was infrequent for some years before his death. Dr. Gannett not only bore the main burden of the preaching[1] until his own strength, miserably over-

[1] Dr. Gannett's manuscript record of his preaching from 1824 to 1842, the period of his joint ministry with Channing, puts me in complete possession of the facts. The little brown book is a pathetic testimony to his minute carefulness. In 1824, Dr. Channing preached eleven times; in 1825, sixteen; 1826, twenty-

taxed, was broken, and after it had rallied, but all the parochial work, for which he was much better fitted than Dr. Channing, too cloud-wrapt in his great soaring thoughts to respond quickly to the personal appeal and reach a human hand. It is hard to conceive that Channing was ever a good pastor, and he did not improve in proportion to his increasing engrossment in the large, social aspect of religion. "I am strong," he said, "before the multitude, but weak before the individual." He had no skill to meet his visitors halfway or to come down to the level of their interests. Especially do those in sorrow require a lively sympathy rather than a lofty generalization. Channing, standing in the midst of a heart-broken family, and saying, "What a mysterious Providence!" is not an edifying spectacle.[2] It is a mistake, however, to imagine that Channing's nature was not

six (this year and the next two were his most active years); 1827, twenty-six; 1828, twenty-seven; 1829, twenty-two; 1830, eighteen; 1831, fourteen (he was in the West Indies from November, 1830, to June, 1831); 1832, six; 1833, nine; 1834, six; 1835, nine; 1836, five (the record breaks off March 20, and is not resumed till December, 1838. In the mean time, Dr. Gannett was in Europe, trying to recover his lost health. How much Dr. Channing preached in his absence I have no means of finding out, but there was certainly no regular dependence on him); 1839, five times; 1840, four; 1841, not once! 1842, twice, the last time on his sixty-second birthday, April 7. It should be remembered that there were two services each Sunday. Channing seldom preached in the afternoon, when Dr. Gannett, after preaching in the morning, generally exchanged. It should also be remembered that Dr. Channing did more preaching than this record signifies, — considerable away from home.

[2] Henry T. Tuckerman, *Characteristics of Literature*, p. 71.

emotional. It was profoundly emotional, and what seemed lack of emotion was habitual self-control. He was stoical in his self-suppression. When told of Follen's dreadful death, he buried an agonized face in his hands for a few moments, and when he spoke again it was with a steady voice. When an ominous crack ran through the Old South Church and a great panic ensued, he stood gazing quietly about him, as if without anxiety. He was, perhaps, too exigent in his demands on others for a self-control as quiet as his own. When Dorothea Dix accompanied him and Mrs. Channing to St. Croix, suffering from an intolerable languor, she became, she writes, "the unfortunate subject of Dr. Channing's jests." "'My dear,' he says to Mrs. Channing, 'where can Miss Dix be? But I need not ask; doubtless very busy as usual. Pray what is that I see on yonder sofa, some object shrouded in white? Oh, that is Miss Dix after all. Well, well, tell it not in Gath! How are the mighty fallen!'" The saints often have this exacting temper. In Channing it implied some lack of personal imagination; perhaps the penalty of the chronic invalid's preoccupation with his own feelings. He was stern with petty exhibitions of half voluntary nervousness. When almost every one in the church was coughing, he said: "This coughing is sympathetic. I will pause till it has ceased." The ensuing stillness was not so miraculous as it appeared. Dr. Furness says that Channing's people hardly dared to breathe when he

was preaching, and that sometimes, at the end of a great passage, you could hear the long-held breath escaping in a general sigh. If his anti-slavery action meant some personal alienation, his great and growing fame assured him an overflowing congregation whenever it was known that he would preach.

I have taxed the kindness of my friends in making out the order of Channing's domestic transmigrations. They have been for me through the dusty volumes of the Boston Directory, and not much is left in doubt. From the Berry Street parsonage he removed after his marriage to the house of his wife's mother on Mt. Vernon Street; next, to a house on Beacon Street, where now stands the Athenæum, having there his own home; and there his children were born. He probably remained there until he went to Europe in 1822. After his return, he went again to the large Gibbs house on Mt. Vernon Street, and continued to live there until his own house was built next door, on the Gibbs house land, in 1835. There were no changes after that. Miss Peabody writes of a period of residence in Hamilton Place, dictated by a desire for a less comfortable and pleasant life than that with Mrs. Gibbs, and the house proving very smoky, his purpose was the better served. But of this experiment the Boston Directory gives no sign, nor any book or memory which I have explored. Our most lively picture of the family circle is furnished by an autobiographical fragment

from the pen of William Henry Channing. But it does not carry us beyond "the Federal Street [Berry Street] parsonage, where all was so simple, quiet, and plain."

My grandmother [Channing's mother] was mirthful and witty, loved her grandchildren dearly, and rejoiced to welcome them; and nothing could have been kinder than all my aunts and uncles. They were jovial,[1] free-spoken, fond of humor, keen at retort in the family circle, and much laughter intermingled with their earnest discussions. Still, the mere sense that this was the parsonage, the recollection that the beloved saintly brother was engaged in his study above, or gone out upon his pastoral round, and might at any moment appear, either from his books or his visits, gave a certain sedate gravity to the manners of the family circle. And under the commanding charm of his presence, and without any wish on his part to curb hilarity, tones became subdued and movements more tranquil, and mild pleasantry took the place of harmless mirth. He was far removed, however, from austerity, sadness, or depression, and he greatly enjoyed the good laugh and sharpshooting of raillery and badinage, indulging in occasional sallies himself.

Few of these have been preserved, his judicious refusal to be involved in Dr. Parkman's criticism of Dr. Tuckerman's sermon having an almost solitary conspicuity. His patience under severe trials of this virtue, while certainly remarkable, was not quite absolute. I have long cherished a story, which I have never seen in print, but which bears

[1] The context shows that Dr. Channing was not included in this characterization.

upon this point. Dr. Tuckerman, on one of his frequent visits, enquired for Mrs. Channing, and was informed that she had gone to Newport to open the house for the summer. "Alone?" asked Dr. Tuckerman. Dr. Channing assented, and Dr. Tuckerman, responding, said, "Do I understand you to say that Mrs. Channing has gone into the country *alone* to open the house for the summer?" "That is what I said, Dr. Tuckerman." "Well, Dr. Channing," said his friend, "you will permit me to say that *I* should not think of asking Mrs. Tuckerman to go into the country *alone* to open the house for the summer." Then Dr. Channing laughed his small, dry laugh and said, "Very likely, Dr. Tuckerman; and, if you should, most probably *she would not go.*" Whereupon questions of large public interest were taken up. He was certainly ungracious when he said, after a vain attempt to make himself clear at one of the women's meetings, "I wish women had more mind." We need not imagine what "lightnings of his holy wrath" would have shrivelled any one who had presumed to tell him "a good story" of the evil kind, for we cannot imagine any one so foolish as to do that. But he had a modest repertory of stories which had tickled his own fancy, and which he could tell with good effect. A favorite one was that of the milder brother who sat under his own pulpit while Tennent, the great revivalist, dealt damnation from it with unsparing hand, until mercy prevailing over justice, the good man slowly rose

and said: "Brother Tennent! Brother Tennent! Is there *no* balm in Gilead, is there *no* physician there?" [1]

The main impression that one gets of the Channing household in its successive stages is that of unlimited talk. The accounts of Channing's conversational attitude differ so much that we are obliged to believe that it had much variety. Some found him the monologist, and others the Socratic questioner. Some could not get on with him at all, and others found themselves in heavenly places, hearing cherubic things. Thirsty for fresh knowledge, let him suspect a well of it, and the part of wisdom seemed to be to pump and pump. Whether the visitor was swift to hear, or to speak, made a great difference. So it happened that Dr. Noyes was grieved because he heard so little, and Dr. Hedge because he heard so much. Said Dr. Hedge: "There was no gossip at Dr. Channing's; the conversation, if you could call it conversation, was always on some high theme. But, in truth, it was not conversation: it was simply a monologue by Dr. Channing himself. This, or something about it, led you to feel very much dissatisfied with yourself when you came away. He did not pay the slightest attention to anything you said. If you asked a question, he probably did not answer it; he went on talking on the thing which interested him." It should

[1] See *Channing as a Man* in Elizabeth P. Channing's *Kindling Thoughts*. She speaks from her own recollections of her father's "brother William."

be noticed that this is Dr. Hale's report of Dr. Hedge, and something of the genial latitude of the former's style has, perhaps, qualified the latter's more exact discrimination. Our best reports of Dr. Channing's talk are Miss Peabody's, and they represent him as "receiving with meekness the engrafted word," a good listener, eager to get at his interlocutor's point of view, and to meet her objections, which were many, fairly and squarely.

Dr. Dewey's personal recollections of his friend are an invaluable resource. He occupied Dr. Channing's pulpit while he was abroad, and preached for him often before the European journey, — not only *for* him, but *to* him. This was no easy matter. "With him in the pulpit," one preacher said, "my text might be 'Forgetting the things that are behind,' but I could n't forget *him*." His first criticism on Dewey's preaching was, "You address yourself too much to the imagination and too little to the conscience." Dewey found the singular weight of Channing's judgment in its intrinsic worth and in the slow carefulness with which it was put forward. "It came in as a kind of reserved force that decides everything." Of his conversation Dr. Dewey says: —

> It was, indeed, altogether a most remarkable thing; and yet I do not know that I would purchase it at the price he paid for it. He stood alone — I found him embosomed in reverence and affection and yet living in a singular isolation. No being was ever more simple, unpretending, and kindly-natured than he, and yet no

such being was surely so inaccessible — not that he was proud, but that he was venerated as something out of the earthly sphere. Scarcely any of his professional brethren, even those for whom he had the highest esteem, had any familiarity or any proper freedom with him. Even Henry Ware, possessing in so many respects a kindred nature, said, "I go to Channing; I listen to him; I go away; that is all." One felt it necessary to sit bolt upright in conversing with him, and to strain his mind as to a task. . . . In a quiet and low tone, with little variety of intonation, without passion, without a jest, without laughter, without one commonplace remark, he went on day after day, either pursuing some one theme, as he often did for days, or, if descending to lower topics, always surveying them from the loftiest point of view, and always talking with such mental insight and such profound emotion as penetrated the heart through and through. There was a kind of suppressed feeling about him, far more touching than any other manifestation could be. . . . It was long before I could lounge upon the sofa, as I talked with him, and say what I pleased. . . . Nobody, I think, ever threw an arm around his shoulders. Nobody, I imagine, ever said, on entering his study, "How d' ye do, Channing?"

Dr. Dewey was curious to see if his biography would exhibit him as ever writing, "My dear Jonathan" or "My dear Phillips" to his nearest friend. He was confident that it would not, and his confidence was justified by the event. Professor Woodberry reminds us that while the apostle "handled the Word made flesh," no one ever handled Dr. Channing. Yet he was averse to all stiffness and formality, disliked his "semilunar

fardels," and would have been plain "Mr. Channing." He heartily disliked the isolating tendency of his character and mourned pathetically, "I am *too serious*." His was a painful apathy to little things, and to many things which were not little to others, though they might seem so to him. What seemed inattention was often abstraction, or the stream running underground. Sometimes the questioner would have his question answered after he had himself forgotten it. At one time Dr. Dewey found him in a small tenant's house in Newport, close by the sea, "passing his days," he said, "in questionings and doubts." Asked if his doubts concerned religion, he said, "No, my doubts are about myself." It was during this same visit that Dr. Dewey, after a two days' stretch on one deep theme, said to Dr. Channing, "I cannot bear this any longer; if you persist in talking in this way, I must take my leave of you and go home." "Well," said Dr. Channing, "let it all drop; let us talk about something else." But in a little while he was back again on the long trail of his persistent thought.

We get glimpses of a less exacting seriousness in the Boston evenings devoted to such "light literature" as "Wilhelm Meister" and Schiller and Richter and Wordsworth and Shelley, Miss Peabody doing the prose reading, Channing himself the poets, with many a pregnant comment. His judgment of Goethe was by no means so harsh as we should anticipate. Indeed, for all the exi-

gency of his moral standards, his Christianity was too closely identified with that of Jesus for him to be otherwise than considerate of men's faults. When the strain of "Wilhelm Meister" proved too great, he would say, "Let us have something a little more enlivening," and Miss Mitford's sketches were brought on. He found Bulwer's novels distressing and delighted in the humanity of Dickens, and, bating his sentimental feudalism, in Scott's crowded and adventurous page.

Channing's domestic happiness was perfect, and overflowed in many expressions of gratitude and satisfaction in his correspondence with his friends. The bright, sympathetic wife, "a great beauty" in her younger days, abounding always in a noble dignity and charm, suffered much from rheumatism, affecting particularly her hands and eyes, and her most scrupulous care was to keep him as much in the dark as possible as to her disability and pain, while guarding his own health and comfort with like assiduity, doing her good to him by stealth. Had he known how much he was being cared for, he would straightway have rebelled. He wrote, in 1834: —

> Our cup runneth over. Life is truly a blessing to us. Could I but see others as happy, what a world this would be! But it *is* a good world, notwithstanding the darkness hanging over it. The longer I live, the more I see the sun breaking through the clouds. I am sure the sun is above them.

The "exuberant, irrepressible animation" of his

children was to him a source of mingled wonder and delight. "The holiday life of my children strikes me as a mystery. . . . Perhaps I do not enjoy it less for comprehending it so little. I see a simple joy which I can trace to no earthly source, and which appears to come fresh from heaven. It seems to me, I could never have been so happy as my children are. I feel as if so bright an infancy, though not distinctly recollected, would still offer to memory a track of light; as if some vernal airs from that early paradise would give vague ideas of a different existence from the present." He talks of "romping" with them, but it must have been with a restrained hilarity, even when "playing horse" and being driven by his coat-tails round the room. It was his wife who was surprised in the act of playing horse upon all fours when a small grandchild had been left to her peculiar care. To no subject did he give more attention than to his children's education. Miss Peabody was one of their teachers and Miss Dix another, and they enjoyed his constant interest in their work. We find him sitting at his children's feet, trying to learn the secret of their light-hearted freedom from all care, and so become more child-like in the Heavenly Father's house.

Natural influences were always congenial to Channing's spirit, and to see him at his best upon the personal and social side, we should see him in his Oakland[1] "garden," as the whole farm was

[1] After the death of Miss Sarah Gibbs it was sold to Mr.

called, so dominant was its garden cultivation. Channing was never so poetic in his sensibility and his expression as in that pleasant haunt. His annual migrations thither began with his married life, and his absence from the city was much lengthened out after the division of his work with Mr. Gannett. Only the French Revolution of 1830 drew him back to the city in early September, that he might pour out his soul in sympathy with the revolutionists. The household was made up more numerously and variously than promised well for Channing's peace of mind. Miss Gibbs owned the farm and ran it; her mother was the presiding genius of its hospitality, and the house was always kept well filled with guests. A family of six, with their own purse and table, did the domestic work, ruling inviolate an independent realm. But this populous aggregation did not trouble Channing in the least. He particularly enjoyed the expansive hospitality of the house; the children it included most of all. Miss Gibbs was such a devout Episcopalian that she would never go to hear Channing when he preached in the vicinity, but their mutual respect and affection easily stood the strain of her rigidity. Moreover, she had confidence in his moral judgment, and when her haymakers, for whom she had provided good coffee, struck for rum, she

Perry Belmont; by him to Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt. Mr. Alfred Vanderbilt, the present owner, is contemplating alterations so elaborate that the original house will be quite hopelessly obscured.

went to her brother-in-law and said, "What should you do, William, if the hay were yours?" "I think I should hold out, Sarah," he replied, and she did so at some loss, through damage to her crop.

Channing among his trees and flowers was capable of a sensuous joy of which he had no call to be ashamed. He said, "I sometimes think that I have a peculiar enjoyment of a fine atmosphere. It is to me a spiritual pleasure rather than physical, and seems to be not unworthy of our future existence." Again, he wrote, "What a blessing such a day as this! So much a creature of the senses am I still, that I can find on such a morning that it is easier to hope in God, and to anticipate a boundless good for my race." "How can I convey to you the music of the trees this moment in my ear, made by a fresh south wind after a shower last night? And yet this is one of my events." "I almost wonder at myself, when I think of the pleasure the dawn gives me after having witnessed it so many years. This blessed light of heaven, how dear it is to me! and this earth which I have trodden so long, with what affection I look on it! I have but a moment ago cast my eyes on the lawn in front of my house, and the sight of it, gemmed with dew and heightened by the shadows of the trees which fall upon it, awakened emotions more vivid, perhaps, than those I felt in youth." He questioned the wisdom of the ancients in speaking of their Mother Earth. "She is so fresh, youthful, living, and rejoicing!" But

then so fruitful, too, and so *exuberant*. So keen was Channing's sensibility to natural beauty that sometimes it was more than he could bear; even the sight of a beautiful flower, as I have already quoted, giving him bodily pain. Again, the natural beauty bred in him a kind of ecstasy which dissolved the substance of the world into a clear transparency: "Do you understand me, when I say that this solid earth and all that it contains seem to me more and more evanescent at the very moment that they reveal to me the Everlasting?" But for the most part the beauty all around him at Oakland quieted his fluttering pulse and gave him calm and poise. From his long retreats, he went back to the city with a dewy freshness on his mind, and with the salt air reminiscent in the tang of many a bracing thought.

He was an early riser at Oakland, and the late sleepers were often wakened by his quick step along the garden walks, as he sallied out before breakfast, under his broad-brimmed Leghorn hat, to taste the sweetness of the morning air. Little went on in tree or shrub or flowering plant of which he was not well aware. His morning greeting was a benediction upon each in turn, received after the night's separation as new gifts from God. His simple breakfast eaten, he went off to his study for an hour's meditation, and from this came back to lead the family in their morning prayers. We have no happier glimpse of him than as engaged in these, the Bible open on his knees, some child

beside him whose little hand he guided, as he read, across the page. Strong men stood in awe of him, but little children ran into his arms. "Oh, this is heaven!" said one whom his "benignant gentleness" had completely won, and another in a competitive examination as to what heaven would be like, said, "Newport and all the folks." The prayers were no conventional exercises of devotion. The Bible reading habitually invited some brief comment, expressed in (Parker's the phrase) "words so deep that a child could understand them." He was never more a child himself than when going down with all that he could muster to the beach, there to catch the sharp buffet of the big waves rolling in. Any roughness that he could bear was a delight to him, compensating him a little for that scant hundred pounds which was his ordinary weight. He liked to ride in a rough farm wagon and be well shaken up. Happy the child or grown person whom he invited to accompany him in his quaint old "one-horse shay." One of my people remembers meeting him on one of these excursions wearing a green veil, — to keep the dust out of his throat. He was driving alone when he met Elizabeth Buffum,[1] then a little girl and most unhappy because she had not been able to withstand the enticement of a ripe peach which had tempted her over a garden wall. Channing took her into his chaise, received her pitiful confession, and induced

[1] Best remembered as Elizabeth Buffum Chace, a woman good to know, faithful in antislavery and in all good reforms.

her to go with him and make it to the owner of the peach-tree. Her daughter, who tells me this, does not tell me whether the pangs of remorse anticipated the eating of the fruit or followed that in due course. All that is pleasantest in our knowledge of Channing's early life comes to us from the talk with which he entertained a favored guest as he drove with her from Portsmouth to Newport and along other beautiful Rhode Island [1] ways.

Within a mile of the homestead there was a little "Christian" church [2] upon a seaward hill, which was open to preachers of all sects, but to no one but Channing when he was staying at Oakland. It was so voted every year. Fishermen and farmers made up the congregation, in which Channing took sincere delight. The preaching here was extempore and of a simplicity which we are told was very beautiful, but there is no record of it remaining. It troubled Channing that it drew fashionable people from Newport to overhear it. Simple as it was, some of the ruder sort could not endure the strain, and would go out, take a turn round the meeting house, and come back refreshed and ready

[1] "My residence," he wrote to Miss Baillie, "is in the very centre of this beautiful island, five miles from the town [Newport]. . . . In natural beauty my island does not seem to me inferior to your Isle of Wight. In cultivation it will bear no comparison. . . . Here I spend four or five months annually, enjoying my tranquillity almost too much; almost reproaching myself for being so happy, when I am doing so little for the happiness of others."

[2] Still occupied by a "Christian" Society, the most thriving on the island outside of Newport.

for a little more instruction in righteousness. Sunday morning often found Channing in the Newport church after its dedication to Unitarian uses, in 1835. When the covenant was submitted to his approval, he objected to the expression, "believing in one God, the Father," fearing, says Mr. Brooks, that the anti-Trinitarian phrase "might, by any soul, be felt to carry with it a rigid and frigid exclusiveness, and set orthodoxy of opinion above the filial and fraternal spirit." Once a year, at least, Channing preached for his young friend, and once he turned to good account the stamping of the horses, outside. Speaking of the indifference of the wealthy to the moral evil in the community, he said, "They are as indifferent to it as the very animals that stand waiting for them at the church door." He not only gave Mr. Brooks the charge at his ordination, the same as that to John S. Dwight (see "Works"), but he officiated at his marriage. Carefully bestowed in the bridegroom's pocket was a wedding ring, but on the way to church Channing inquired if that symbol might not be dispensed with. Mr. Brooks immediately assented. The lady was not consulted, any more than the notorious Frenchwoman as to whether she would be born. She told me that her good opinion of Dr. Channing was sensibly diminished by that summary treatment of her wishes as a negligible quantity.

There are those who have the gift of making friends, but no corresponding power of keeping

them. Channing reversed this order. His friends, in any intimate sense, were few, but their friendship was of long continuance, only death severing the bond. We have apparently exhausted the list when we have named Jonathan Phillips and Joseph Tuckerman: adding Charles Follen from a date not long subsequent to his arrival in this country. And Phillips and Tuckerman were Channing's college mates, and his friendship with them began under the college elms. "Know him?" said Dr. Tuckerman. "He, Mr. Phillips, and I are like three spirits in one." They were three little men, and in conversation their thin voices were high-pitched, and they often talked with so much earnestness and vehemence that to those in an adjoining room they seemed to be quarrelling. And, indeed, their talk was no "mush of concession." Dr. Tuckerman sometimes got out of patience with Dr. Channing for thinking so much of his preaching, and saving himself for it, and Dr. Channing, as we have seen, challenged Dr. Tuckerman's effusiveness and demanded proof that he was not pitying away poor people's self-reliance. The friendship of these men was based upon a common interest in great moral and social questions. We find no element of cordiality in their relations. Dr. Channing's letters to Dr. Tuckerman are careful disquisitions; they have nothing of the freedom, spontaneity, and variety which assure to personal correspondence its interest and charm. Channing's admiration for Mr. Phillips was very great; he thought him "a

remarkable man." "He is one of the intuitive men whom I take delight in much more than in the merely logical." Mr. Phillips's estimate of Channing was one of Emerson's favorite examples of what understatement could effect. Speaking of Channing in a circle of his admirers, Mr. Phillips said, "I have known him long, I have studied his character, and I believe him capable of virtue." In his college days, Phillips was sceptical and atheistic. Later, by way of Bacon, he came round to Christianity, joined Channing's church, and became one of his deacons. His early influence on Channing was depressing. "His was an imagination that hung the whole universe in crape." There were recurrent periods of pessimistic gloom, with threatenings of mental aberration. His special care for Dr. Channing was to preserve him from the ecclesiastical temper. Paradoxical as it may seem, he sometimes found Dr. Channing hyperclerical, and would say to him, "You know, you are a clergyman." Miss Peabody recollected Channing as once replying with some sharpness, "Yes, I know it, and always remember the disadvantage."

Channing's friendship with Dr. Follen dated from 1827, when Miss Cabot, the noble woman whom Dr. Follen married, brought him to one of Channing's conversational meetings. The subject was the death of Jesus, and Dr. Follen took part in the discussion. Silence followed his remarks, until Channing rose abruptly, and with unconscious

eagerness pulled out his watch. Upon this hint, the company broke up, and Channing, making a push for Dr. Follen, seized his hand, and said, "Sir, we must know each other better." The friendship thus begun grew warmer till the tragic end. It was through Follen that Channing made his closest approaches to the Abolitionists, with whom Follen identified himself, holding their doctrines with some personal modifications. I have seemed to find in Channing's later thought more of Follen's than of any other personal influence. Those tendencies in his preaching which were deplored as transcendental were quite surely, in some measure, developments of germs which fell into his own from Follen's fruitful mind.

Channing's literary friendships were without any sentimental implication whatsoever. His letters to the Misses Roscoe, to Miss Martineau, to Miss Baillie, to Mrs. Hemans, to Miss Aikin, and other English friends, have, as a rule, no personal warmth. They are serene and delicate disclosures of his thought upon the great social and religious themes which were never absent from his mind. But to Miss Martineau, soon after her return to England, he wrote, in answer to a letter from her that touched him with its peculiar kindness, "I thank you for this expression of your heart. Without the least tendency to distrust, without the least dejection at the idea of neglect, with entire gratitude for my lot, I still feel that I have not the power which so many others have of awakening

love, except in a very narrow circle. I knew that I enjoyed your esteem, but I expected to fade with my native land, not from your thought, but from your heart. Your letter satisfies me that I have one more *friend* in England." It is a pathetic, almost tragical appearance that Channing presents to us, — isolated at once by his own diffidence, "this tyrant which has palsied and unmanned me often enough," and by the awe which he inspired by his impressive moral elevation. Both feared and fearful, it is not strange that once we find him crying out upon his lonely life with passionate regret.

He enjoyed much companionship for which "friendship" would be too large a designation. Such was his relation with Lydia Maria Child, with Dorothea Dix, and with Elizabeth Peabody. From him, but more from his impassioned colleague, Dr. Gannett, Miss Dix took gratefully that sacred fire with which she sought to illuminate the darkness of disordered minds. Miss Peabody's relation to Channing remains somewhat enigmatical when we arrive at her last page. Clearly she was most serviceable to him, but sometimes superserviceable. She copied forty of his sermons, he, meantime, translating Plato's dialogues to her out of a French version into his own lucidity of phrase. He doubted her ability to copy, and at the same time attend to his translation. No wonder, but she convinced him she was equal to the test. But if Channing's patience with her chirp

and twitter was so complete as we are permitted to infer from her report, it must have been a virtue of peculiar strength. A few times it failed him, when she brought to him the gossip of the town: once that Garrison had said that he was "living in luxury on the price of human blood," and again that he was penurious and had accepted her service without proper recognition and reward. In regard to the former item, Channing asked, "Have you any authority but rumor for saying that Garrison made the gross charge against me? To rumor I give no weight. I do not believe that he said this."[1] Regarding the second charge, Channing wrote, "Is it not possible that you talked confusedly of your circumstances and your copying for me, so that some one's stupidity misconstrued your language into an imputation on my honor? . . . But cannot you avoid talking about me? . . . Miss Martineau was not so much to blame. I find by her letter to me that there is a very strong and wide impression of my personal meanness in the expenditure of money. There is, indeed, no point of character on which I should not sooner have expected an attack. . . . Money has always seemed to me *what it is*, and so little value have I attached

[1] Miss Peabody adds, "I think it appeared in the *Liberator*." If so, it has escaped the patient scrutiny of Mr. W. P. Garrison. The charge was based on the fact that Channing's father-in-law, Mr. Gibbs, of Newport, owned a distillery, and sold his rum (Channing is speaking) "to a firm supposed to be engaged in the slave-trade." The rumor, probably, intended that the rum was exchanged for slaves according to the custom of the time.

to it, that I cannot ascribe to myself any merit or virtue for giving it away. My principle is to spend my whole income, without reserving anything. For me to accumulate would be morally wrong." We have, in another letter, the means of adjusting this statement with Channing's relation to his wife's property. That he always considered exclusively her own, and congratulated himself on his freedom from her financial cares. But to save nothing was her rule as well as his. The injurious report seems to have arisen in the spite of some person whose vanity he had offended.

The last years of Channing's life were enriched by a correspondence with Joseph Blanco White, a man of profound religious nature and of a religious experience so wide that it included Roman Catholicism and an anti-supernatural Christianity within its two extremes. His best title[1] to fame is his great sonnet "To Night," one of the most perfect sonnets in English literature, though written by a man of Spanish birth and education. His "Life," edited by J. H. Thom, mainly autobiographical, is one of the most significant disclosures of religious experience[2] ever given to the world. White's pro-

[1] Another is his leading part as a friend and aider of Dr. Thomas Arnold and a founder of the Broad Church School in the English Church. See *passim*, R. W. Church's *Oxford Movement*.

[2] Published in 1845. It was Lucretia Mott's most precious book, and as such, she held it in her hand when having her portrait painted. She gave me her copy a few years before her death, when the book had become extremely rare. I have no possession that I value more.

longed sickness and suffering gave ample scope to Channing's sympathy. In one of his earlier letters he writes, "So long as we can think clearly, we can carry on the great work of life, we can turn suffering to a glorious account, we can gather from new triumphs over the body a new consciousness of the divinity of the spirit." In a later one, "Your experience differs from mine, for I have had little acute pain. I do not know that I ever suggested to you a fancy that has sometimes come into my head. I have thought that, by analyzing a pain, I have been able to find an element of pleasure in it. I have thought, too, that, by looking a pain fully in the face and comprehending it, I have diminished its intensity. Distinct perception, instead of aggravating, decreases evil. . . . The power of distinct knowledge in giving courage I have never seen insisted on, and yet it is a part of my experience." In the same letter there is a good criticism of Don Quixote. He venerates the knight too much to laugh at him, and wonders if Cervantes, beginning with a lower conception, did not find a higher stealing on him as he went along. After the death of White, Channing wrote an English friend, "Perhaps you hardly knew how dear he was to me. I had never seen him, but the imagination and the heart had woven a tie as strong as real intercourse produces." The "Life" of Blanco White is much fuller than the Channing "Memoirs" in its revelation of the mutual regards of these truth-loving souls. It has the advantage

of producing both sides of the correspondence. This was Channing's closest contact with a non-miraculous Christianity. He held fast the integrity of his own position, saying, "I need miracles less now than formerly; but could I have got where I am, had not miracles entered into the past history of the world?" ("Yes, indeed!" writes Lucretia Mott in the margin.) Throughout the correspondence White impresses us as the acuter intellect, but not as the more open mind. Channing's final impression of White appears in a letter to Mr. Thom, White's most intimate Unitarian friend and biographer: —

> I have sometimes observed on the beach, which I am in the habit of visiting, a solemn, unceasing undertone, quite distinct from the clashings of the separate, successive waves; and so in certain minds I observe a deep undertone of truth, even where they express particular views which seem to me discordant or false. I had always this feeling about Mr. White. I could not always agree with him, but I felt that he never lost his grasp of the greatest truths.

In general, Channing's correspondence with English Unitarians must have done much to modify his impression of their character. They were the people who knew and honored Garrison, and they brought to Channing a sympathy with his anti-slavery sentiments which shamed the apathy of his Boston parishioners and friends, and atoned for certain theological defects. If the Priestley tradition was materialistic and necessarian on the intel-

lectual side, on the moral side it always made for political and religious liberty and for humane sympathies with the victims of injustice and oppression; and these things counted as the "weightier matters" in the scales of Channing's habitual discrimination.

At this stage of my attention to the personal aspect of Channing's life, a generalized conception of the man may not be out of place. What are the conspicuous physical and intellectual and moral notes that constitute the impression which we have so far received? First, an ill-constituted body. Certainly that; and, while we must concede some gracious quality to his defect, — the delicacy and refinement that are the pallid flowers of such an organization, — he was condemned by it to a cloistered virtue, lacking the red blood that would have carried him out into the big world and have given color to his style, concreteness to his illustrations, experience to his abstract morality, greater effectiveness to his social and public influence. It is hard to strike the balance, but it is permitted us to believe that without being differently made, just with his natural health unspoiled, he would have been — I play with Matthew Arnold's phrase — a not less beautiful but more effectual angel, bearing upon his luminous wings a fuller message to mankind.

Intellectually, Channing has enjoyed the eminence which, like that of an isolated mountain, is relative to the low-lying plain. His measure was

taken at a time when Boston was emerging from an intellectual mediocrity to which Fisher Ames bulked as another Burke or Cicero or Demosthenes, while denominational pride did much to aggravate the miscalculation and to pass it on. But, compared with the great intellects of the centuries, his intellectual ability makes as modest an appearance as his intellectual acquirements compared with those of the great scholars. We have only to compare him with Martineau, to find him vastly overtopped. He had moral, not intellectual, imagination, and his reputation for poetical sensibility and expression reflects the meagreness of American poetry in his time. The passages in his works that were esteemed poetical by his contemporaries now affect us as rhetorical. His strength as a writer was quite independent of those curious felicities of style which make a picture for the eye, a tremor for the heart. On the other hand, his was a remarkable sanity of mind, incapable, for example, of those vagaries which disfigured the more powerful intellect of Priestley with incidents that were grotesque.[1]

He gave to Christian supernaturalism so rational an interpretation that for as many as believed with him it lost all its grossness. He had a genius for prolonged and serious meditation, and this it was that gave to his thought a personal quality, a real-

[1] Such as his predicting the second coming of Jesus within twenty years, and his finding prophecies of Nelson and Napoleon in the Old Testament!

ity, that is not to be escaped. Much in the body of his speculative opinion we can parallel in the writings of his contemporaries and near predecessors; but before he called it his, and passed it on as such, he brought to it the brooding tests of many silent hours. He made it his own by the seriousness and intensity of his appropriation. This intellectual virtue was at the bottom of that oracular manner in which many found the pride of intellectual superiority.[1] It will not do to say that his persistent "I" meant nothing more than that he was speaking for himself and relieving others of responsibility. It also meant that he was speaking from the depth of personal conviction; that with a great price he had bought this freedom from the bondage of contemporary sect and creed.

But Channing's preëminence in his own generation, and his abiding claim upon our admiration and our reverence are far less intellectual than moral and spiritual. It is in fact the moral temper of his mind, its openness to fresh conviction, that is its most impressive trait. The moral uses of the intellect were to him subjects of his constant interest. That miserable antithesis of intellect and virtue, in which weak-minded persons frequently indulge, had for him no attraction. It was significant that "mind" was his inclusive word, taking up intellect and conscience into its capacious

[1] While yet it would have been strange had not the immense homage paid to him as a great spiritual director infected his self-consciousness to an appreciable degree.

breadth. Intellect and morals existed for him only in an indissoluble unity. But spirituality was his most characteristic note. He was not under the law, but under grace. He was in love with goodness, enamoured of perfection. He was a man of the beatitudes, so many of them found abundant illustration in the habits of his life. The blessing of the peacemakers was upon him; the blessing of the pure in heart. But his peculiar blessing was that of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. If Channing did not do this, no man ever did. And, according to the promise, he was filled.

This brings us to the most interesting and suggestive criticism ever made on Channing, that of the anonymous critic who said, "He was kept from the highest goodness by his love of rectitude." This meant, perhaps, that morbid introspection of his conduct checked his spontaneity; that he wasted in trying to *be* good the strength which had been spent to better advantage in trying to *do* good. It is doubtful if this criticism ever fairly applied to Channing. In his most introspective period, he brought his *being good* to the test of *doing good* with unswerving resolution. But if the meaning was that Channing's passion for the perfect form of social rectitude kept him back from that "highest goodness" which is coextensive with the best practicable course of action, the criticism may, perhaps, be accepted as a valid one. The indicated fault is not, however, one from which society or the

individual suffers much. They suffer every day an hundred times as much from a too easy acceptance of an imperfect form of action as the best to which they can attain. They make the practicable the excuse for avoidable misdoing, the grave of the ideal.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST STAGE

CHANNING'S mother had died May 25, 1834, the period of her widowhood having extended over more than forty years. She was buried in the Cambridge churchyard by her mother's side, — the mother who had died so young. Channing's life had been closely interknit with his mother's. Always, when returning from Newport, he went straight to her for a long talk, and thereafter counted that day almost as bad as lost that did not find him at her side. The day after her death, writing to a friend, he cried out: "Who can be to me what she has been? To whom can I be what I have been to her?" He could think of her last years with great pleasure and thankfulness. "Her character seemed to improve, which is not the ordinary experience of age:" he must be the moral judge even in his filial sorrow. "She extended, instead of narrowing, her interests, and found an increasing happiness in her social affections." Her conversational vivacity attracted many friends, "yet it never seemed to enter her mind that she was capable of giving pleasure. She ascribed to the pure good will of others what was

chiefly owing to herself. I look on her last days as her best days. . . . The winter of her age seemed warmed and brightened with the fervor of youthful feeling."

It was, perhaps, Channing's sense that, by the death of his mother, he had become the head of the family, which instigated him soon after that event to establish himself in his own house, a new and spacious one,[1] on land which the Gibbs mansion had to spare. In June, 1835, we find him writing to a friend: —

So you are building a house. By what sympathy is it that we are both carrying on the same work at once? I hope, however, your practical wisdom has kept you from my error. My house threatens to swell beyond my means, so that I cannot think of it with a perfectly quiet conscience. This is the only point in which I am in danger of extravagance. I spend nothing on luxuries, amusements, shows. My food is the simplest; my clothes sometimes call for rebuke from affectionate friends, not for their want of neatness, but for their venerable age. But one indulgence I want, — a good house, open to the sun and air, with apartments large enough for breathing freely, and commanding something of earth and sky. A friend of mine repeated to me the saying of a child, — "Mother, the country has more sky than the town." Now I want sky, and my house, though in a city, gives me a fine sweep of prospect, and an air almost as free as the country.

[1] No. 83 Mt. Vernon Street. Quite recently, Mr. William H. Baldwin occupied it for some years, and few could have enjoyed that privilege with more reverent appreciation. Mr. Baldwin's service in the Young Men's Christian Union has been exactly in the line of one of Channing's dearest hopes.

Given "a good house" and ample sky, and he could say, "I wish more and more a simple, unostentatious way of living. . . . My aim is to spend nothing on myself which health and usefulness do not require. . . . Were I entering on life, instead of approaching its end, with my present views and feelings, and with no ties, I should strive for a condition which, without severing me from society, would leave me more free to act from my own spirit, to follow faithfully and uncompromisingly the highest manifestations of virtue made to my mind. . . . I cannot wear costly garments when I see such a man as Allston scarcely able to live. What a disgrace it is to Boston that the greatest genius of this country in his department should be in want! Millions are spent on decoration every year, but nothing is given to him. I would have our private dwellings simple, but our public edifices magnificent models of taste, and ornaments to the city. I would have a public gallery freely open. We should not keep pictures at home, or more than one, perhaps, and the rest should be for the community. . . . The way to be comfortable here is to live simply." He deprecated expensive furniture as of the least possible value, but several articles of his that I have seen are very beautiful, and would be highly appreciated by those in search of "heirlooms, but not of their own family." It is evident that his simple tastes were sometimes inhibited by a higher power. Boston had grown (1835) to be a city of 77,000

inhabitants, yet some people were not satisfied. They wanted a railroad to connect the city with the West, and double the population. "What good is to come from this great accumulation of people I do not see." "But if I did not love and honor Boston, I would say nothing of its defects. . . . I would leave it for no other place under heaven." The pessimists, despairing of progress, were, he said, its greatest bane.

Exhilarated by his morning bath, he often had some early hours of glowing mental satisfaction. His first business was to write down the good thoughts that had come to him in his sleepless hours; the next to read a chapter or two of the New Testament in the original Greek; these things before breakfast, after which he led the morning devotions, in no perfunctory manner, and then went to his study. Jonathan Edwards, on his meditative walks, used to pin pieces of white paper to his clothes to keep his better thoughts in mind. He must have come home looking like a feathered creature. Channing was content to interleave his books with slips of paper, on which, reading with pen in hand, he wrote the criticisms and suggestions proper to the book under his eye. These slips were afterward assorted and labelled with much care. He waited patiently for his better hours of final composition, and did not force his mood. "I have great faith," he said, "in inspiration; but it is a fruit and reward of faithful toil, not a chance influence entirely out of our power." Once he

had written anything, and more especially when he had printed it, he dismissed it from his thoughts, comparing himself to the bird that no longer cares for her offspring when they have taken flight.

Noon found the morning's joyful vigor spent, and then he welcomed Jonathan Phillips for a walk along the Common's pleasant edge; before coming home browsing awhile in the Athenæum over the foreign papers and reviews, and visiting parishioners, especially such as were in poverty or any personal distress. After dinner, he took to the sofa and invited sleep, but often found the goddess *invita.* At sunset, he betook himself to some upper chamber, where he could look out over Charles River's broad expanse, and the wide sweep of the hills to which he had lifted up his eyes under Judge Dana's willows in his college days. In the spring and autumn, his habit was to share this quiet hour with others, but in the winter twilights he liked best to be alone, — "alone with the Alone." Of the employment of his evening hours, enough has been said already. Miss Peabody's "Reminiscences" gives the best account of it.

In many ways the later years of Channing's life were years of widening sympathies, of a "less ministerial and more manly" habit of thought and speech, of wistful eagerness to come in contact with a more various activity, intellectual, social, and political. Hence the "Self-Culture" lecture in the Franklin course in 1838, and the double lecture, "On the Elevation of the Laboring

Classes" in 1840, the two best expressions of his mind in its reaction on the social problems of his time. His lecture on "War," in 1838, goes to the same account, and his several later ventures into the antislavery field. The year 1841 was not a fruitful one for him in a general way. He suffered, in Newport, from a protracted and severe illness. He was conspicuously absent, as we have seen, from the ministrations of the Federal Street church. He added nothing to his antislavery file. But the month of May that year justified for him the high confidence of Emerson in May's rejuvenating power. It took him to Philadelphia, where, for some weeks apparently, he was the guest of Dr. Furness, and where he delivered two of his most notable addresses, "The Present Age," May 11, before the Mercantile Library Company, and "The Church," Sunday, May 30, before Dr. Furness's people. We have some particulars which concern the former from Dr. Furness's own hand. Having seldom spoken in other places than churches, Channing was not much used to applause, and Dr. Furness, being afraid that it would disconcert him, warned him of what he might expect. "Oh," said he, afterward, when Dr. Furness referred to it as genuine and hearty, "it did me good." Midway of the address, without the least embarrassment, he said that he would sit down and rest awhile. He did so, and presently resumed his course without having lost his grip. When he spoke of Franklin's kite, says Dr. Furness, "We all saw it floating,

white, afar off in the darkness." What Channing said (misquoted by Dr. Furness) was, that "the kite which brought lightning from heaven, will be seen sailing in the clouds by remote posterity, when the city where Franklin dwelt may be known only by its ruins." If this allusion flattered local pride, there were other passages that had a quite different effect. Philadelphia was not then the stronghold of protectionism which it is now, but "the American system" was even then no "infant industry." The applause which did Channing good could hardly have responded to his exclamation, "Free trade! this is the plain duty and plain interest of the human race." He went on, "To level all barriers to free exchange; to cut up the system of restriction root and branch; to open every port on earth to every product, — this is the office of enlightened humanity. To this a free nation should especially pledge itself. Freedom of the seas; freedom of harbors; an intercourse of nations, free as the winds, — this is not a dream of philanthropists. We are tending towards it, and let us hasten it." Channing's prophetic soul brooding on things to come was nowhere else so little justified by the event as here. If his economics opened a great gulf between him and the Whiggism, once Federalism, of 1841, his reflections on the French Revolution showed how much he had unlearned of the anti-Gallican Federalism of his younger days. He could now see that the horrors of the Revolution were effects of crimes more monstrous than

themselves, "a corruption of the great, too deep to be purged away except by destruction." And he thought the fable was for us. He had no fears from popular excesses. "Communities fall by the vices of the prosperous ranks." And the plutocratic feudalism to which we are now tending with a vast and apparently irresistible momentum affords a pregnant comment on his words.

Those who would know what kind of an expansionist Channing was should read this Philadelphia address. It is a lofty celebration of the increasing universality of thought and life, a plea for more expansive sympathies. The spirit of the great sermon on the Church, which was delivered a few weeks later in the same city, was the same spirit. In the Church as it had been, he found "the very stronghold of the lusts and vices which Christianity most abhors." "The church which opens on heaven is that, and that only, in which the spirit of heaven dwells." "Purity of heart and life, Christ's spirit of love towards God and man; this is all in all. This is the only essential thing." In its main effect the sermon was a clear vision of the Church Universal, not as travestied by Rome or Geneva, but as existing in the common hopes and aspirations of all generous and holy souls.

> There *is* one grand, all-comprehending Church, and, if I am a Christian, I belong to it, and no man can shut me out of it. You may exclude me from your Roman Church, your Episcopal Church, and your Calvinistic Church, on account of supposed defects in my creed or

my sect, and I am content to be excluded. But I will not be severed from the great body of Christ. Who shall sunder me from such men as Fénelon, and Pascal, and Borromeo, from Archbishop Leighton, Jeremy Taylor, and John Howard? Who can rupture the spiritual bond between these men and myself? Do I not hold them dear? Does not their spirit, flowing out through their writings and lives, penetrate my soul? Are they not a portion of my being? . . . And is it in the power of synod, or conclave, or of all the ecclesiastical combinations on earth, to part me from them? . . . A pure mind is free of the universe. It belongs to the church, the family of the pure, in all worlds. Virtue is no local thing. It is honorable for its own independent, everlasting beauty. This is the bond of the universal church. No man can be excommunicated from it but by himself, by the death of goodness in his own breast.

He pleaded for the extension of preaching to the characterization of great men, and not merely Bible men. "Goodness owes nothing to the circumstance of its being recorded in a sacred book, nor loses its claim to grateful, reverent communication because not blazoned there." But from every excursion he came back to his central theme. We may join particular churches, provided we do it without severing ourselves in the least from the church universal. "On this point we cannot be too earnest. We must shun the spirit of sectarianism as from hell. We must shudder at the thought of shutting up God in any denomination. We must think no man the better for belonging to our communion; no man the worse for belonging to an-

other. We must look with undiminished joy on goodness, though it shine forth from the most adverse sect."

There was earnest deprecation of the use of any symbol, baptism or the Lord's Supper, as a bond of fellowship. When speaking of baptism he approximated the harshness of Theodore Parker's description of the eucharistic elements as "baker's bread and grocer's wine." He said, "That the Infinite Father, who is ever present to the human soul, to whom it is unspeakably dear, who has created it for communion with him, who desires and delights to impart to it his grace, that he should ordain *sea-bathing* as a condition or means of spiritual communication, is so improbable that I must insist on the strongest testimony to its truth." The sacramental theory of religion, which at this time was enjoying a revival in England, that of the Tractarian Movement, was of all theories the most repellent to Channing. There was no place for a priesthood in his church universal. "The surest device for making the mind a coward and a slave is a widespread and closely cemented church, the powers of which are concentrated in the hands of a 'sacred order.'"

In the mean time Channing's formal connection with the Federal Street Society had suffered gradual attenuation, until at last there was very little of it left. If, before his entrance on his antislavery career, he could groan in spirit that there was "no general response" in the society to his senti-

ments, "general indifference rather," this feeling must have been much intensified as time went on, and the "general indifference" took on the positive lines of specialized depreciation and distrust. But the sphere of the preacher's influence is to so great an extent the sphere of silence that Channing's moral idealism had no doubt much freer course and much more practical response among his people than he dared believe, and the degree to which his antislavery and reformatory spirit detached from him their sympathies has probably been as much exaggerated in some quarters as it has been obscured in others. Yet more than once we find him smarting under a lash whose swish has a familiar sound. "People bear patiently what it is understood they will not practice. But if the preacher 'come down,' as it is called, from these heights, and assail in sober earnest deep-rooted abuses, respectable vices, inhuman institutions or arrangements, and unjust means of gain, which interest, pride, and habit have made dear and next to universal, the people who exact from him official holiness are shocked, offended. 'He forgets his sphere.'"

Successive reductions of Dr. Channing's salary, at his own request, had, I think, little or no relation to criticisms of this kind, more or less common, but were dictated by his actual and conscious abridgment of his preaching and parochial work. As early as 1825 he wished to surrender a quarter of his salary, which at the maximum was $2000,

but his wish was overruled. In 1827 he speaks of it as $1600, and wishes to have it reduced to $1200. In 1829 a further reduction of $200 was granted; in 1830 another to the same amount. In 1832 he proposed to relinquish the remaining part, and was prevailed upon to withdraw his proposal, but the next year he insisted on a reduction to $600. In 1838, when Dr. Gannett's health seemed to require a colleague or assistant, Dr. Channing again urged the immediate and unconditional abolition of his salary, but, Dr. Gannett's health improving, there was no disturbance of the *status quo*. In 1840, however, he succeeded in having his own way, and, possibly, the entire cessation of his preaching in 1841 may have borne some relation to the complete severance of the pecuniary bond. The correspondence touching this generous rivalry is printed in the "Memoir," and it abounds in expressions of mutual kindness and consideration. Channing could write in 1840, "It is, indeed, a gratifying consideration, that our long union has not been disturbed by a word of contention." I have been plausibly assured that Channing received at least one letter from the clerk of the society, critical of his antislavery course, that was remarkable for its discourtesy, but if such a letter was written, it was strictly personal,[1] —

[1] His personal relations with the clerk of the society, Mr. George S. Hillard, were particularly friendly in 1842, when his antislavery zeal was burning with its purest flame, Mr. Hillard assisting him, with Charles Sumner, in the reading of his "Creole" proofs.

the records of the society, which I have carefully examined, preserving no sign of it. Those lamentable incidents, the refusal of the church to him for the Antislavery Society and for the Follen Memorial service, were, let us trust, the most flagrant instances of Channing's inability to enamour his parishioners with his own conception of social righteousness. But more and more as he went on, he looked away from them, and such as they, to "the less prosperous classes" for the signs of a new day. "The prosperous and distinguished of this world," he said, "given as they generally are to epicurean indulgence and vain show, are among the last to comprehend the worth of a human being, to penetrate the evils of society, or to impart to it a fresh impulse."

The last four years of Channing's life were illustrated by as many conspicuous antislavery documents: three of them published in printed form, one, and the last, by his living voice; and this was printed some time after its delivery, by some local printer of Berkshire County. Bare mention has been made already of these four expressions of his antislavery mind, but they deserve fuller appreciation. Henry Clay's speech of February 7, 1839, was his bid for the presidency, then approaching the conclusion of Van Buren's term. "That *is* property which the law declares *to be* property" was its most piercing note. It defended slavery in the District of Columbia, opposed antislavery petitions touching that matter, affirmed the inviolable per-

manence of slavery in the slave States, and demanded immunity for it from Northern criticism and rebuke. Channing, in a letter to Jonathan Phillips, took direct issue with Clay on all these grounds. He refused to believe that slavery was a permanent institution; he opposed its existence in the District of Columbia, and defended the right of petition against that existence; also the right of the North to criticise and condemn the institution as existing in the slave States. With some criticism of the Abolitionists, he had much praise for them, and particular denunciation for the burning of their Pennsylvania Hall and other acts of interference with their liberty of speech. As for the colonizationists, "who dream of removing slavery by the process of draining it off to another country," he called the process "about as reasonable as draining the Atlantic." It is, he said, a doctrine "that does only harm among ourselves. It has confirmed the prejudice to which slavery owes much of its strength, that the colored man cannot live and prosper on these shores." Encouraging the peculiar industry of the slave-breeding States, it had "done much to harden the slaveholder in his purpose of holding fast his victim, and thus increased the necessity of more earnest remonstrance against slavery. . . . What avails our liberty of speech if, on a grave question of duty, we must hold our peace?" The complicity of the North was set forth in unsparing terms. "As our merchants and manufacturers cast their eyes south-

ward, what do they see? Cotton, cotton, nothing but cotton. This fills the whole southern horizon. What care they for the poor human tools by whom it is reared? . . . What change do they desire in a system so gainful? Men call it in vague language an evil, just as they call religion good; in both cases giving assent to a lifeless form of words, which they forget while they utter them, and have no power over their lives."

Strong as the letter was, it did not satisfy Garrison. Falstaff's bread to Falstaff's sack was not less than Channing's criticism of the Abolitionists in proportion to his condemnation of slavery, but to Garrison's sensibility the proportions were reversed. Especially did one ill-considered sentence give Garrison his opportunity: "To me the slaveholder is very much of an abstraction." It was characteristic and unfortunate. If, however, Channing did not come up to Garrison's standard, his antislavery thinking was much more radical than that of the political Republicans of 1856–60. These made no demand for the abolition of slavery in the District, nor any for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. If Mr. Blaine can be trusted on this point, they occupied in 1860 the ground of the compromises of 1850. But Channing's demand was incessant for abolition in the District, for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law (which was much aggravated in 1850), and he preferred disunion to the annexation of Texas in the interest of slavery.

While demurring at the organized abolitionism of which Garrison was the head and front, Channing had more liking for that than for the political abolitionism which developed into the Liberty Party, with such gradual recession as he anticipated from the loftiest ideals. He was very much impressed by the interest awakened in his "Emancipation," his antislavery publication for the year 1840. "The Abolitionists have given me a cordial welcome, and it delights me to see how a great common object establishes in an hour a confidence and friendship which years are sometimes necessary to produce." He is referring to his visit to Philadelphia in 1841, and he goes on, "I cannot tell you the hospitalities which my Abolition labors win for me, nor was I aware of the extent of their influence." The "Emancipation," a pamphlet of eighty-nine pages, brought him a precious letter from Clarkson with a lock of his hair, — a generous token from one past eighty years of age. The pamphlet was ostensibly a review of the condition of the West Indies at a time when the emancipation there had shown to some extent what it was likely to effect. It was based upon certain open letters to Henry Clay, written by Joseph John Gurney, an English orthodox Quaker, with a good antislavery record in England, but in America, like Kossuth, Father Mathew, and some other persons of importance, careful in his avoidance of the Garrisonians. Commending much in Gurney's letters, and in their application to American condi-

tions, Channing denounced their emphasis on the economic success of emancipation: "This concern for property, this unconcern for human nature, is a sign of the little progress made even here by free principles, and of men's ignorance of the great end of social union. . . . A better age will look with wonder and scorn on the misdirected industry of the present times. The only sure sign of public prosperity is that the mass of the people are steadily multiplying the comforts of life and the means of improvement. . . . My maxim is, 'Anything but slavery! Poverty sooner than slavery.'"

Touching the relation of Christianity to the slave power, Channing's denunciation of the American churches was quite as stern as James G. Birney's, which pilloried them as "the bulwark of slavery." And slavery was not the only evil power that crooked the hinges of the churchmen's knees that thrift might follow fawning. "What wrong or abuse is there which the bulk of the people may think essential to their prosperity and may defend with outcry and menace, before which the Christianity of this age will not bow?" Remarkably at variance with some of our more recent thinking is Channing's good opinion of the negro race: "The history of West Indian emancipation teaches us that we are holding in bondage one of the best races of the human family." He hesitated to decide "to which of the races in the Southern States Christianity was most adapted and in which its

noblest disciples were most likely to be reared." In conclusion he renewed the contention of his recent letter to Jonathan Phillips with regard to the duties of the Free States. He demanded an amendment to the Constitution that would liberate the North from its "covenant with death and agreement with hell." If he did not use Garrison's favorite Scripture, he dipped his pen in no rosewater ink. And with the pamphlet, as a whole, Garrison was apparently well pleased. "Their strength," said Channing of the Abolitionists, "has always lain in the simplicity of their religious trust, in their confidence in Christian truth. Formerly the hope sometimes crossed my mind that, by enlarging their views and purifying their spirit, they would gradually become a religious community, founded on the recognition of Jesus Christ as having lived and died to unite to himself and to baptize with his spirit every human soul, and on the recognition of the brotherhood of all God's human family. . . . I thought I saw in the principles with which the Abolitionists started, a struggling of the human mind toward this Christian union." This is the best word that Channing ever said for Garrison, for it was in the Garrisonian simplicity that he found this promise; it was the development of political Abolitionism that made him fear for this promise — that it would not be kept.[1]

[1] See, in this connection, Joseph Henry Allen's "A Nineteenth-Century Religion," page 197 of his *Positive Religion.*

The same year that found Channing busy with his "Emancipation," was marked by the most painful and discouraging event of his whole life, and possibly this gave to the sword of his spirit a keener edge in the "Emancipation" book. In the antislavery letter of 1839, Channing had said, following a glowing tribute to Gerrit Smith as a leader of the Abolitionists, "In their ranks may also be found our common friend, that geniune man, that heroic spirit, whose love of freedom unites, in rare harmony, the old Roman force with Christian love; in whom we see the rash enthusiasm of his youth tempered into a most sweet and winning virtue." Follen, the object of this praise, left New York for Boston, January 13, 1840, on the Sound steamer Lexington; and on her way to Stonington the steamer took fire, and, of her 164 passengers and crew, but four were saved. Follen was not likely to be one of the saved, and he was not. The Massachusetts Antislavery Society requested the use of the Federal Street church for a commemoration service, at which Samuel J. May was to make the appropriate address. Channing heartily seconded the request, but it was denied by the church officers. It was perfectly well known that Follen was one of Channing's dearest friends, but great public considerations triumphed over the personal appeal. William Henry Channing says in the "Memoir," "This manifestation of a want of high sentiment in the congregation, to which for so many years he had officiated as pastor, made

him question the usefulness of his whole ministry. To what end had he poured out his soul, if such conduct was a practical embodiment of the principles and precepts which he had so earnestly inculcated." Channing could not, however, be prevented from delivering a discourse of his own on Follen's character, let who would hear it or forbear. But that, including the Follen sermon, he preached at Federal Street only four times that year, and not once the next, may, without violence, perhaps, be taken as a sign of his instinctive withdrawal from a ministry to which such an incident was possible.[1] That "great refusal" had gone nigh to break his heart.

About this time, or soon after, Channing was busy with the preparation of a complete edition of his works, which was published in 1841 in five volumes, which included the contents of the two earlier volumes. A sixth, containing the later anti-slavery writings, and some others, was added in 1843. Had not an impulse of personal kindness come to the aid of Channing's too deliberate volition, this act of self-assertion would probably have been impossible for him. But he seemed able to do something for the prospects of his brother George, just then making some publishing

[1] There is no conflict between this surmise and that above, touching the complete severance of the pecuniary bond between Channing and the Federal Street church. This severance followed closely on the Follen incident. The *post hoc* was, perhaps, not a *propter hoc*; it is more likely that it was, at least in some degree.

connection, by giving him the copyright of the edition, and this, accordingly, he did; but with the understanding that, in a few years, the books should be much reduced in price, and put within the reach of those "less prosperous people" to whom Channing gave the first place in his thoughts.[1]

The last year of Channing's life was the only one marked by two elaborate additions to the list of his antislavery writings. These were the double pamphlet, "The Duty of the Free States" and the Lenox Address. The former was inspired by the case of the Creole, a brig sailing from Hampton Roads to New Orleans with a cargo of 135 slaves in November, 1841. On November 7, the slaves took possession of the vessel, killing their owner and severely wounding the captain of the brig and others, officers and men. The brig was taken into the British port of Nassau, in the island of New Providence. Mr. Webster, then Tyler's Secretary

[1] The Rev. Herman Snow, Harvard Divinity School, 1843, sends me a manuscript account of his adventures with the cheaper edition, $2.50 for the six volumes (originally $6.00) in 1848. He travelled widely in New England and penetrated eastern New York. Though sickness hampered him and abridged his round, in the course of eight months he placed nearly five thousand volumes of Channing's writings, together with the just published *Memoir*. The story is a very interesting and instructive one. Mr. Snow's modesty as a book agent was such as to bring a blush to the brazen cheek of the book agent as developed in these later times, but his success was not impaired by it. His manuscript is to be a permanent possession of the Divinity School Library. — In 1854 the Association reported that 100,000 copies of the *Works* had been sold!

of State, demanded from England the restitution of the slaves, but not, of course, as slaves, — as mutineers and murderers. Hence Channing's pamphlet, one of the strongest that he ever wrote. Charles Sumner was back from his long European journey, and a great intimacy had sprung up between him and Channing, who read to him and his son William F. Channing and George S. Hillard the manuscript before its publication. We find Sumner and Hillard — a strange conjunction, in view of their divergence further on — reading the proofs of the pamphlet after Dr. Channing had left Boston and gone to Pennsylvania for a bit of travel. In the first part of the pamphlet Channing reviewed Webster's position with severe discrimination. It signified, he said, that the United States is bound to extend the shield of its protection over slavery abroad as well as at home. In the second part, he returned to the duty of the Free States to free themselves from all complicity with slavery, withdrawing from the Union should Texas be annexed. September 4, little dreaming that Channing had not then a month to live, Sumner, with the Creole pamphlet in his mind, wrote to his brother George: —

> Who excels, who equals, Webster in intellect? I mean in the mere dead weight of intellect. With the moral elevation of Channing, he would become a prophet. Webster wants sympathy with the mass, — with humanity, with truth. If this had been living within him, he never could have written his Creole letter. Without

Webster's massive argumentation, Channing sways the world with a stronger influence. Thanks to God, who has made the hearts of men to respond to what is elevated, noble, true! Whose position would you prefer, — that of Webster or Channing? I know the latter intimately; and my admiration for him grows constantly. When I was younger than I am now, I was presumptuous enough to question his power. . . . I am glad that I am wise enough to see him in a different light. His moral nature is powerful, and he writes under the strong instincts which this supplies; and the appeal is felt by the world.

On his sixty-second birthday, as already noted, Channing preached for the last time in the Federal Street church. The text was from 2 Cor. iv. 18, and the subject was his "one sublime idea — the greatness of the soul," the subject of all his preaching to an unparalleled degree. He had long been desiring to visit the interior of Pennsylvania, especially the banks of the Juniata and the valley of Wyoming. He started prematurely, found the roads impassable, was obliged to take to the canal boats for night travel, broke down, and for nearly a month was a prisoner at a hotel in Wilkesbarre. The beauty of the Susquehanna made his convalescence a sufficient compensation and delight. Writing of this to Harriet Martineau, he turns from it to the circulation of his books among the laboring classes, and says, "*To me* this is *fame*." "A thousand times better than fame!" he had once said of a workingman's letter. Early in July he reached Lenox, and remained there two months,

making excursions to Stockbridge and the Bashpish Falls. Established at the Lenox inn, he was in constant communication with the Sedgwicks, people of fine intelligence and culture and pronounced ideality. He was never happier, nor diffused more happiness. The Sedgwicks did not find the man and friend obscured by the prophet and the saint. The unconventional atmosphere exactly suited him. Asked what period of life he thought happiest, he answered, "About sixty." "Our cup of outward good," he wrote, "seems overflowing, and I receive it thankfully, not forgetting how soon it may pass from us." He enjoyed the wildness of the Berkshire Hills, but also the agricultural softening of the valleys, time wearing out the wrinkles of the ancient mother, so that she was growing younger all the time. Some personal notes must here be reproduced. "I have kept up by books my acquaintance with all classes; but real life is the best book. At the end of life, I see that I have lived too much by myself. I wish *you* more courage, cordiality, and real union with your race. . . . I sometimes feel as if I had never known anything of human nature until lately, — but so it will be forever. . . . My reserve is not to be broken down in these latter years of my life, but I think the ice melts. . . . I should incline much, if I were in better health, to break every chain, and harden myself for a life of wider experience and more earnest struggle." Curiosity mingled with his delight in natural things. He wrote, "Amidst such

Elysian beauty, the chains which the spirit wears are broken, and it goes forth to blend with and enjoy the universe;" and also wondering "whether light may not be a more important physical agent than it has been considered, — whether the various rays may not prevail in different proportions at different times, and whether the preponderance of one — say the red or violet — may not exert unsuspected influence on vegetable and animal nature." There surely he was on the track of secrets that Tyndall and Helmholtz and other eager huntsmen have run down.

And so, always learning, ever more hopeful, simple, brave, he came to August 1, 1842, and to the last public utterance of his life. He spoke uninvited, finding the Berkshire people forgetful of the slave, and resolved to stir up their pure minds. The mountains, sacred to liberty, were his inspiration. There could not be a lovelier spot than that where stands the meeting-house in which he spoke. Fanny Kemble was of this opinion, and wished to be buried in the churchyard, where the dead neighbor the living congregation as with conscious joy. One perfect day I went on pilgrimage to this sacred place, walking more than thirty miles across country, and coming to my goal just as the shadows of the hills were lengthening down the valley and the night was setting in. I have never felt so near to Channing as I did then and there. The first of August proved to be one of the finest days imaginable. The clear air helped, but the speaker had

not strength to read all that he had written. Nevertheless, he spoke for an hour and a quarter, and he ended with the apostrophe, the prayer, that many of us know so well, —

> O come, thou kingdom of heaven, for which we daily pray! Come, Friend and Saviour of the race, who didst shed thy blood on the cross to reconcile man to man and earth to heaven! Come, Father Almighty, and crown with thine omnipotence the humble strivings of thy children to subvert oppression and wrong, to spread light and freedom and peace and joy, the truth and spirit of thy Son, through the whole earth!

The words could not have been more of the essence of his life if they had been deliberately chosen as his last. The day was the eighth anniversary of the beginning of the West Indian Emancipation, the fourth anniversary of the rounded completion of that great event. It was Channing's purpose to hold up that act of sovereign justice as an object lesson to his countrymen. And this he did with a persuasiveness that must have won the most reluctant minds. All of his other great antislavery utterances had been printed, not spoken. If this had less than the best of those of solid argument, it had more than any of them of emotional ardor, of complete abandonment to the spirit of the solemn theme. He had never spoken to his fellow men more powerfully than in this Sermon on the Mount, and for his public work we could not imagine or desire a better end.

The address taxed Channing's strength so much

that for some days after it he was a broken wave, but, rallying once more, the remaining weeks of August proved full of peace and pleasantness, and early in September he set out for home, taking the longest way round, through the Green Mountains. I have walked much of that country through, and know how beautiful are the scenes that greeted him and his companions as they drove along, Greylock besetting them before, and then behind, like a great mountain god. But the Berkshire air had brought him poison on its wings, and, arrived at Bennington, he found that he could not go on. The trouble was a typhoid fever, and the wonder is that one so frail held out so long against it — for twenty-six days, during which hope and fear alternated in their hearts who watched beside his bed. The Walloomsac inn, where he was lying, was fortunately a pleasant one. From its eastern front one looked across the village green and the East Bennington valley to the Green Mountain wall. Perhaps some other genius of the place than John Stark, whose monument is near the inn, would have been more congenial to Channing. Probably he did not know that next door but one was the office of the "Journal of the Times," where Garrison did good editorial work and Lundy found him out. His consideration for others never failed. His gratitude for every service rendered him put others in his debt. To Mr. Hicks, his landlord, and to the housemaid, he was as courteous as if they had been king and queen. His presence made

a stillness round about, even a company of soldiers on the green, and at the inn table, hushing their customary noise.

His mind did not wander, but was excited overmuch. He begged his friends to talk of common things, and charm away "these crowds of images, these visions of immensity, and rushing thoughts." He had many that were calm and sweet. "We must beware," he said, "of overexcited feeling, of vague sentiment, of mingling our theoretical views or our favorite imaginations with the truth. We need to feel the *reality*," — this with great earnestness, — "the REALITY of the spiritual life." Nothing pleased him more than to hear of the quiet courage of certain people who had made great sacrifices in the antislavery cause. Often he seemed praying in his sleep, his lips murmuring, "Heavenly Father!" Sleeping a little after a restless night, he said, "I do not know that my heart was ever so overflowed by a grateful sense of the goodness of God." Thursday night, September 29, was wholly sleepless, but he had great enjoyment of his thoughts. The next night, when Webster was swaying a great multitude in Faneuil Hall, defending his retention of his place in Tyler's cabinet, Channing, ignorant of all that, felt that his end was near. He wished he might get home "to die;" then added quickly, "But it will all be well; it *is* all well." Sunday, October 2, he wished all his friends to go to church, but permitted them to stay with him, and asked one of them to read from

the New Testament — the Sermon on the Mount. At the end of the Lord's Prayer, he said, "That will do now," and that Scripture reading was the last. His voice sank, but his last audible words had still the pattern of his soul. They were, "I have received many messages from the spirit."

They turned him in his bed that he might look upon the eastern hills, on which, and on the sky above them, the reflected sunset light was warm and beautiful. Through the parted curtains and a clambering vine, it stole in upon his face. None knew just when he passed, but he died looking eastward, as if expectant of another dawn.

The body was taken to Boston, and the echoes of Webster's great defiant speech were quenched by the deep toll of Channing's funeral bells, those of the Roman Catholic cathedral with the rest, for it was remembered that, when the good Bishop Cheverus died, Channing had done him honor above all. He lay before the pulpit from which he had delivered his great message, his face but little paler than in life, the brown hair straying in the remembered way across the marble brow. Dr. Gannett's sermon was a cordial tribute, perfectly simple and sincere; but few of those who heard it understood what a great man was dead.

CHAPTER XIV

AS DYING AND BEHOLD!

THERE was no lack of the proverbial readiness to build the prophet's sepulchre and decorate it with unstinting hand. We have no means of knowing how many sermons in praise of Channing were occasioned by his death. Of those published, Dr. Gannett bound up a collection in a big volume which lies here on my desk. It is fuller than another collection entrusted to my care, and if not complete, is, I imagine, nearly so.[1] Either collection

[1] The American sermons are by E. S. Gannett, Funeral Address, October 7, 1842; E. S. Gannett, Sermon in Federal Street church, October 9; George E. Ellis; Theodore Parker; Edward B. Hall; Henry W. Bellows; Frederic H. Hedge; Orville Dewey; James Freeman Clarke; Henry Bacon (Universalist); John Pierpont; Cyrus A. Bartol; Charles T. Brooks; James H. Perkins. The last two are in newspaper form, the others in pamphlet. Dewey's sermon, from which I have quoted freely, was the most elaborate and the fullest in its reminiscences of personal traits. Hedge's critical instinct did not forsake him, and he said, "His was not what one would call an original mind. . . . He did not see further than other men, but he saw more distinctly, with a more careful discrimination, and a more intense appreciation of the object. . . . Originality was not his gift, but effective utterance was." In the English collection there are thirteen sermons, with important extracts from others, by J. J. Tayler and James Martineau. Such well-known Unitarian names as Hutton, Madge, Armstrong, Tagart, Gordon, Drummond, and Carpenter appear;

makes it plain that Channing's reputation was quite as distinguished in the mother country as in this. Dr. Ellis, in his sermon, anticipated a fuller recognition of Channing's antislavery and reformatory zeal in England than in America, and his anticipation was made good in the event: naturally, for it is always easier to recognize and applaud the reformer at long range than close at hand. Here, some of the eulogists slurred Channing's reformatory spirit as of little consequence. Others, who could not do this, damned it with faint or ill-proportioned praise, some using Channing's antislavery temper as a background against which to bring out that of the Abolitionists in harsh relief. But Theodore Parker, James Freeman Clarke, and John Pierpont gave due prominence to that part of Channing's work which meant most to him in his maturest years.

The poets brought their pebbles to his cairn. Bryant, an earnest Unitarian, did not, except possibly a hymn sung at the memorial service in New York, nor Emerson; nor Holmes, whose Unitarian consciousness intensified as his moral earnestness increased. Longfellow's tribute, though written after Channing's death, was written without know-

several of which are worn in our own generation by those whom we delight to honor. The most notable of the English sermons is Mr. Aspland's, for the reason that it is supplemented with a series of well-chosen extracts from Channing's writings, with notes explanatory and critical, one of these quoting extensively from Harriet Martineau's strictures on Channing's depreciation of Priestley.

ledge of that event, on the Atlantic, as a prelude to his "Antislavery Poems." "Well done!" he sang, —

> Well done! thy words are great and bold;
> At times they seem to me
> Like Luther's, in the days of old,
> Half-battles for the free.
>
> Go on, until this land revokes
> The old and chartered Lie,
> The feudal curse whose whips and yokes
> Insult humanity.

Lowell's contribution was a very noble "Elegy on the death of Dr. Channing," its crowning stanza bright with a prophecy that still awaits its hour, —

> From off the starry mountain peaks of song,
> Thy spirit shows me, in the coming time,
> An earth unwithered by the foot of wrong,
> A race revering its own soul sublime.

But all these were to the Unitarian manner born and bred. The fitness of things required that the most admirable poetical appreciation should come from Whittier, a Quaker poet, and yet the one of all our major choir who has embodied the most of Channing's humane and liberal spirit in his various song. One stanza took its color from the Lenox Address: —

> How echoes yet each western hill
> And vale with Channing's dying word!
> How are the hearts of freemen still
> By that great warning stirred!

Another stanza touched that reward of Channing's work which was the most to him of all: —

Swart smiters of the glowing steel,
Dark feeders of the forge's flame,
Pale watchers at the loom and wheel,
Repeat his honored name.

The publication of the "Memoir" in 1848 was a happy circumstance for Channing's memory and fame. The best that I can hope for this book of mine is that it will send many to that fountain-head. It would be quite impossible for me to exaggerate my sense of its sufficiency, though some details of its arrangement are almost as bad as possible.[1] Precious as Channing's collected writings are, it has seemed to me that the "Memoir" is even more precious. I have never tired of commending it to my younger fellow ministers as an indispensable aid to intellectual freedom and to spiritual growth. The nephew's appreciation of the uncle leaves nothing to desire, but it is the mass of Channing's self-expression that constitutes the value of the "Memoir" to a preëminent degree. It is a painful thought that this mass, which has been my envy and despair, has had a deterrent influence on many readers. Great has been their reward who have not halted on the threshold, but, entering the house, have penetrated every room, enjoyed each wide outlook, and bowed themselves at every secret shrine.

[1] The lack of an index to the original three volumes made confusion worse confounded, but this defect has been remedied to admiration in the one-volume "Centenary Edition" of the Unitarian Association. This, with the one-volume (indexed) edition of Channing's works, published by the Association in 1875, has had wide circulation. The *Works* can be had for the asking by settled ministers of any denomination.

Stuart of Andover was not the only antagonist of Channing who in this revelation of his deeper mind found unexpected veins of spiritual and moral gold. But from all the more elaborate reviews of the "Memoir" two stand out with special prominence, — Garrison's and Martineau's. Garrison's appeared in "The Liberator," xviii. 82, and is reproduced in the "Story" of Garrison's life told by his sons, iii. 239–242. Not every particular will satisfy Channing's most or least intelligent admirers, but, all things considered, there are few testimonies to his moral worth that deserve more careful attention. At the risk of doing Garrison injustice, I take a few sentences where I should like to take the whole: —

My impressions of Dr. Channing were that he was somewhat cold in temperament, timid in spirit, and oracular in feeling. But these have been greatly, if not entirely, removed by a perusal of this memoir. I see him now in a new phase — in a better light. He certainly had no ardor of soul, but a mild and steady warmth of character appears to have been natural to him. I do not now think that he was timid in a condemnatory sense; but his circumspection was almost excessive, his veneration large, and distrust of himself, rather than a fear of others, led him to appear to shrink from an uncompromising application of the principles he cherished. In the theological arena he exhibited more courage than elsewhere; yet, even there, he was far from being boldly aggressive, for controversy was not to his taste. In striving to be catholic and magnanimous, he was led to apologize for those who de-

served severe condemnation. He was ever reluctant to believe that men sin wilfully, and, therefore, preferred to attack sin in the abstract than to deal with it personally. . . . In a pioneering sense, Dr. Channing was not a reformer; sympathetically, and through a conscientious conviction, he was. . . . It is equally interesting and cheering to perceive his growing interest in reform and reformers. His voice of rebuke to a guilty nation was growing stronger, and his "all-hail" to the true-hearted more emphatic continually. . . . His preëminence was not intellectual — for he had not an extraordinary intellect — but moral, religious, humane, in the largest and best use of those terms. He was utterly divorced from bigotry and sectarism. He believed in eternal progress, and therefore never stood still, but went onward — if not rapidly, without faltering. He changed his views and positions from time to time, but only to advance, never to retreat. Theologically he is to be regarded as a prodigy on the score of independent investigation and free utterance. In this field, his labors cannot be overestimated.

Generous allowance is made for the fact that he was a clergyman, "an office which it is scarcely possible for any man to fill without loss of independence," that he moved in a wealthy and aristocratic circle, "the last to sympathize with outcast humanity," and that he was allied with the Unitarians, who were "deeply afflicted and mortified with his Abolition tendencies." Then comes the pathetic personal note: —

Much to my regret, I had no personal acquaintance with this remarkable man, though I longed for at least a single interview. As he never expressed a wish to

converse with me, I did not feel free to intrude myself upon his notice. For twelve years he saw me struggling against all that was evil in the land,— in a cause worthy of universal acclaim, — with fidelity and an unfaltering spirit, but during all that time he never conveyed to me, directly or indirectly, a word of cheer or a whisper of encouragement. Consequently, we never met for an interchange of sentiments. Had we done so, though there is no probability that we should have seen eye to eye in all things, we might have been mutually benefited. I am sure that he misjudged my spirit, as well as misapprehended the philosophy of the antislavery reform; and I now think that I did not fully appreciate the difficulties of his situation or the peculiarities of his mind.

Martineau's review of the "Memoir" appeared in the "Westminster Review" of January, 1849, and it is reproduced in the first volume of his "Essays, Reviews, and Addresses." The article abounds in admirable judgments upon special aspects of Channing's thought and life. There is wonder that such speculations as those of Hume and Berkeley should have overpassed him like a summer cloud, without his special wonder. "The truth is," he says, "that the intensity of the moral sentiment within him absorbed everything into itself; made his reflective activity wholly predominant over the apprehensive, and determined it in one invariable direction. He meditated, where others would have learned; and the materials of his knowledge disappeared as fast as they were given, in the larger generalizations of his faith.

His mind thus grew, while his attainments made no show, and, while he missed the praise of learning, he won an affluence of wisdom." The keynote of the whole of Dr. Channing's character is found in "his sense of the inherent greatness of man," which "remained the immovable centre of his reverence and trust. It was, in fact, his *natural* creed. A mind distinguished for purity and quickness of moral apprehension cannot but believe at least in the *occasional realities* of the excellence and beauty it discerns; and this will rise into the belief in their universal possibility, if there be also remarkable strength of will and habitual self-conquest. It is difficult for genius, it is impossible for goodness, to suppose others incapable of seeing its visions, and outstripping its achievements." Martineau finds "Channing's love of indeterminate and widely suggestive language an inseparable part of his religion" and a sign of his fundamental difference from the schools of Calvin and Priestley, with their fondness for a highly elaborated and closely connected system. At this point, Martineau speaks with much earnestness and a strong personal inflection, for no one else did so much as Channing to free him from Priestley's necessarian and materialistic bonds. The introduction to Channing's collected works might well have been the inspiration of Martineau's subsequent prolonged endeavor to save human freedom from submergence in matter or in God, and God and matter from submergence in an idealism which allows reality to nothing

but the ideas of the human mind. Martineau's comparison of Channing and Priestley is done in his most characteristic manner. He finds them representing "views of religion as fundamentally opposed as any which can arise within the limits of a common Theism."[1] "Neither of them succeeds in reconciling with each other the deductions separately drawn from the objective and subjective point of view, and bridging over the chasm between the Causal and the Moral God." He finds Channing less coherent and complete than Priestley, but Priestley's coherency and completeness at the expense of a responsible morality. But Martineau's idea that Channing looked on Calvin with "milder antipathy" than on Priestley, is not justified by the habitual stress of Channing's utterance. Systems of theology did not present themselves to him as they did to Martineau, panoplied in the completeness of their philosophical implications. What was most obvious impressed him most; and Calvin's God and man, both totally depraved, excited in him a much more positive antipathy than Priestley's materialistic psychology and necessarian ethics, obscured by their obvious appearance of

[1] Was theirs "a common Theism"? Priestley was a Christian Deist; and Channing, if not a Christian Theist, approximated that standing. He kept up some formal connection with the Paley-ontologists, but essentially was less implicated in their "natural theology" than was Theodore Parker. If he went to Nature, she always sent him back to his own soul. The heavens declared to him the glory of God, mainly because they declared to him the glory of Newton and Laplace.

infinite goodness in God and natural capacity for goodness in mankind.

The year 1848 was a year of such political activity that the Channing "Memoir" must have been quite overlooked, had it not contained so much that was pertinent to the political situation. But Lowell's "Biglow Papers," published the same year, might well have drawn from it their vital juices, their passionate reprobation of both war and slavery. In 1850 came the compromises of Clay, and found Webster sharing with Douglas the brunt of their support. It is easy to imagine with what noble indignation Channing would have repudiated them, and with what ignoble indignation the respectability of Boston would have repudiated him for his offence; with what mental agony he would have seen Sims and Burns sent back into slavery by a Boston court, the court-house hung in chains; and how sincerely he would have rejoiced in those signs of awakening conscience in the city of his loving hope when the Missouri Compromise was broken down and, four years later, the Dred Scott decision made the slave-owner welcome to take his property with him wherever he might choose to go. Doubtless, the great war would have put upon Channing's peace principles a severe strain, but it must be remembered that he had said, clenching his tiny fist, "There are times when we *must* fight," and would he not have conceived that one of these had come at length? If not, he would still have cried with Garrison, whose

peace principles were more absolute, "God help the righteous side!" He would have rejoiced in every Northern victory, most of all in those of September 22, 1862, and January 1, 1863, — the emancipation proclamations of those dates. The war over, he would have hesitated at "manhood suffrage" as an immediate gift to the late slaves, while looking steadily to it as an ideal end. Only with sorrowful deprecation could he have seen them flung into the political arena, and there, dazed by the light of their new freedom, made the sport of those who goaded them to wild excess. But what we hardly can imagine is the piteous shame with which he would have regarded the race prejudice and hatred which have trailed the land with blood and fire, while the political partizans, having no further use for the negro, have looked on complacently. On the other hand, he would have, could he revisit us, the encouragement of such noble and effective work as that done at Hampton and Tuskegee, and other similar places in the South.

It is a conviction not to be escaped that along the line of this development, and especially throughout the antislavery debate, the influence of Channing was a potent one for the purification of political ideals and for the breaking of every yoke that pressed a human being down. As Spenser is the poets' poet, so Channing was the reformers' reformer. His writings and the tradition of his character were unfailing springs of social aspira-

tion. If, since Channing died, philanthropy has had freer expansion in Boston than in any other city, if there the treatment of the poor, the blind, the insane, the criminal, has excited the most careful thought and attracted the most faithful service, if for educational light and leading Boston has been preëminent during this period, may it not be said, while every other valid claim is cheerfully allowed, that no other personal influence has been comparable with that which flowed from Channing's mind and heart?

On theological and religious lines his influence was less apparent in the earlier stages of his posthumous fame than on those obviously social and philanthropic. The controversy excited by Theodore Parker's South Boston Sermon and his "Discourse on Matters pertaining to Religion" jangled the bells of Channing's funeral solemnity and made a painful discord in the Unitarian ranks for many years. Here a sense of having shirked or faltered, there a fear of catching Parker's taint infected the Unitarian consciousness with a certain torpor of timidity and shame. "It is almost a fact," says William C. Gannett, "that there is no Unitarian history from 1845 to 1865." But this inclusion wrongs the years of Dr. Gannett's presidency of the Association, 1847–1851, and those of Freeman Clarke's ascendency, 1861–1865. Dr. Clarke might well speak of the denomination, as he found it in 1859, as "a discouraged denomination." It had been given over to that "Unitarian ortho-

doxy," the growth of which Channing had deplored in his last years, and, in ironical defiance of his spirit, those of the conservative party called themselves "Channing Unitarians," making his doctrinal positions, more or less accurately understood, ends beyond which there must be no advance. Nevertheless when the National Conference was organized in 1865, in response to Dr. Bellows's impassioned plea for a new comprehension of Unitarian principles and ideals, an elaborate creed, which was earnestly recommended to the Conference, was rejected by an overwhelming vote; and from that time onward, with some variable winds, the course has been pretty steadily towards Channing's spirit, rather than to his doctrine, as the mark of our high calling.

In the mean time there was widening appreciation of Channing out of Unitarian bounds and in European countries. Renan's remarkable essay was inspired by his desire to check an enthusiasm for Channing in France which to Renan's critical temper appeared overstrained, but his protest was one of the most significant tributes paid to Channing's historical importance and the universality of his moral influence. The most active spirit in the French movement back to Channing was M. Laboulaye, and, apparently, it was the "Memoir" that gave the first impulse to his admiration. He went on for many years translating and recommending Channing's "Works," and they prepared him for that intelligent sympathy with America which possessed

him wholly when he, too, wrote of "The Uprising of a Great People" [1] in a manner peculiarly grateful to the American heart when there was a fearful dearth of European sympathy with our Northern States. He said, "If Channing were but one sectary more in the religious Babel, I should not have called attention to him;" but he was "a good man who, all his life, consumed by one sentiment and idea, sought truth and justice with all the forces of his intellect and loved God and man with all the strength of his heart." Renan's qualifications did not prevent others from following Laboulaye. M. de Rémusat furnished an elaborate preface to an excellent book of four hundred pages upon Channing's life and work, hailing him as a prophet who belonged to no one sect or communion, but only to the universal church of Christ. But this was Protestant commendation. So was not that of M. Lavollée, whose "Channing: sa Vie et sa Doctrine" was the enthusiastic tribute of a Roman Catholic scholar, his book of such literary distinction as to be crowned by the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.[2] He found Channing's most distinctive character in his universal love and fraternity, and after this in his confidence and —

[1] The title of Count Gasparin's book, the spirit of which was precisely Laboulaye's.

[2] M. Jules Simon, president of the society, said, "It is as the adviser of the people that Channing has attained to an unprecedented sublimity and efficacy. . . . Time cannot weaken the force of his apostolic teachings, which deserve the attention of all nations."

audacity! He asked, "How can any one help loving, in Channing, the defender of all the oppressed, the advocate of all the miserable, the truly Christian apostle, consecrating his energies and his life to the emancipation of the negro, to the spread of popular education? How can any one help pardoning in him, after so many noble efforts, an excess of optimism and of confidence carried, perhaps, to the verge of illusion?" He compares Channing with Fénelon and says, "Both have vowed to Jesus a love equally lively and profound, but while the one adores and prays, the other contemplates and reveres." [1]

In Germany Channing's works were translated as early as 1850 and made a wide and deep impression, which found in Baron Bunsen, a devout Trinitarian, its most significant illustration. In his "God in History," he hailed Channing as "a grand Christian saint and man of God, — nay also as a prophet of the Christian consciousness regarding the future, destined to exert an increasing influence." He said, "If such a man, whose whole life and conversation, in the sight of all his fellow citizens, stand in absolute correspondence with the earnestness of his Christian language, and are without a spot, be not a prophet of God's presence in

[1] Some of the more recent studies of Fénelon — Brunetière's, Crouslé's, and St. Cyres' — make for the persuasion that Channing, though "hardly Christian" measured by M. Lavollée's theological standards, was of a more consistent saintliness than the ecclesiastical courtier who pacified the Huguenots of Saintonges by a policy of "wholesale dissimulation, bribery, and espionage."

humanity, I know of none such." In England Channing has had much cordial recognition, and that increasingly. This has sometimes had the connotation of a claim upon his sympathy with orthodox opinion, but oftener it has been inspired by a perception of a spirit in him that transcends all sectarian differences. It was not Channing's approximation to an orthodox Christology that delighted Frederick Robertson, but his enthusiasm for the moral worth of Jesus. It was because Channing was one of the pioneers of spiritual freedom that Dean Stanley, when here in America, reverently visited his grave with Phillips Brooks.

The centennial of Channing's birth, April 7, 1880, was signalized by a public recognition of his character and influence which extended far beyond the boundaries of the Unitarian denomination. While the local celebrations, here and abroad, were conducted by Unitarians, there were many cordial responses to the invitations extended to evangelical leaders, and on the part of these there was ample acknowledgment of Channing's historical significance, his softening of the harsher creeds, his superiority to sectarian narrowness, his philanthropic spirit, and of the impetus given by him to social improvement and reform. In Brooklyn, Henry Ward Beecher's clearest note was that of rejoicing over the improvement of Channing's views on those of Lyman Beecher. There was no juster word than that of the Jewish Rabbi, Dr. Gustav Gottheil, my honored friend, who said: —

The impression I have gathered from Dr. Channing's writings is that his theory of Christianity cannot be substantiated by the literary and historical proofs on which he relied; but it participated in his own deeply moral nature, his own great mind, his deep and loving heart; he roams, as it were, in the ancient halls, calling to his aid all the spirits which he thought would minister to the ideal which alone could satisfy his own spiritual needs and those of his generation. . . . Though he always meant to speak as a disciple, he, in truth, spoke as a master. You feel when you read him that he was much bolder than he knew, and that all his thoughts have the force and freshness of a spontaneous mind, and do not state what he found in the book, but in his own reason and conscience.

The centennial marked among Unitarians a notable decline of the attempt to make Channing's theology the standard of Unitarian theological propriety, a notable appeal to his free spirit for its encouragement and justification of a radical intellectual transformation. All of the men who had known Channing well had not yet gone over to the majority, and from Dewey, Furness, Bellows, Bartol, and others, there was much tranquil recollection of the impression made by his living presence on their lives.[1] The seventy-fifth anniversary of

[1] Incidental to the centennial celebration was the laying of the corner-stone of the beautiful Channing Memorial Church in Newport, with a sermon equal to the day by Dr. Bellows, escaping wholly from the bounds of Channing's doctrine into the freedom of his spirit. The city of his birth also commemorates him, since 1893, with a statue, the work of W. Clarke Noble, and the gift of William G. Weld of Boston. The centennial of Channing's

the original meeting of the American Unitarian Association was celebrated in Boston with great pomp and circumstance. A significant feature was the equal honor paid to Channing, Parker, Emerson, and Martineau, by men carefully chosen, each for his special task, while delegates from every part of Europe and from Asia added their voices to the domestic "tumult of acclaim." The interpretation of Channing fell to William C. Gannett, and to say that it was conceived in perfect sympathy with Channing's spirit is its sufficient praise. The keynote was struck in the title, "Channing an Apostle of the Spiritual Life." Channing's great emphases were driven home, mainly in his own words, — the superiority of character to sect or creed; goodness, alike in man and God, the supreme object of admiration and desire. "To-day's New Orthodoxy," he said, "is a belated Unitarianism. Largely in doctrine, completely in spirit, in principles, in characteristic emphases and tendencies, it is 'Unitarianism with the copyright run out.'" But there was no pleased anticipation of a Unitarian development that would sweep the broken ranks of Orthodoxy into its wide array; rather a prophecy of an inclusion that would transcend the differences which have hitherto prevailed, of a more perfect union than that which, for a century

entrance on his work in Boston will see his statue by Herbert Adams, a work of great dignity and refinement and an inspired interpretation, set up in Boston in the Public Garden, facing the Arlington Street Church, Channing's in the straight line of descent.

before the outbreak of 1815, mocked with its formal unity the contradictory elements that were striving against each other in the agitated bosom of the time.

There could be no clearer sign of the extent to which that which was prophecy in Channing is fulfilment now, than Harnack's "What is Christianity?" Here is a book, up to the level of which have come hundreds of preachers in the various orthodox churches and thousands of the laity, so that if we speak of "Liberal Christianity," we are bound to recognize that only the smaller part of it is coterminous with the Unitarian development, or with this and the Universalist together. Comparing Channing with Harnack, what do we find? That they are perfectly agreed in their opinion of the essential qualities of Christianity, the main teachings of Jesus: the heavenly kingdom upon earth; the Fatherhood of God; the infinite value of the human soul; the higher righteousness and the commandment of love. In many particulars we find the "progressive orthodoxy" of Harnack far in advance of the positions to which Channing had arrived. The Bible, which was for Channing a book plenarily, though not verbally inspired, is for Harnack a collection of simply and entirely human writings. The virgin-birth of Jesus, at which Channing did not hesitate, has for Harnack no credibility; and the resurrection of Jesus, of which Channing had never a doubt, is for Harnack incapable of proof. "Either," he says, "we

must decide to rest our belief on a foundation unstable and exposed to fresh doubts, or else we must abandon this foundation altogether with its miraculous appeal to our senses." Miracles in general were a great deal to Channing. He did not, with Andrews Norton and some others, think it criminal to accept the teachings of Jesus on their intrinsic merits and not because of his miraculous credentials, but hardly could he conceive of Christian belief and character without miraculous aid. Harnack's view reproduces that of Theodore Parker. It is, in Harnack's words, "The question of miracles is of relative indifference compared with everything else which is to be found in the gospels." The doctrine of Christ's double nature is as intolerable to Harnack as it was to Channing, but his escape from it is by a much straighter path than Channing's Arianism, or the Socinianism of Priestley and others. His view is purely humanitarian. Channing, indeed, would have been much shocked at his pathetic plea for our genial tolerance of the intellectual mistakes of Jesus in the matter of demoniacal possession and a personal devil.

It is easy to make too much of any personal example. Turn we, then, to the hundreds of books emanating from preachers and professors who are in good and regular standing in orthodox churches and theological schools, books written by such men as Abbott, Gordon, Harris, Paine, Van Dyke, whose average constructions are much more at variance with the traditional standards than were

those of Dr. Channing. Turn we to the many thousands who confidently reject the doctrine of eternal punishment, where Channing made only a faint demur. Turn we to the Presbyterian General Assembly (1902), presided over by Henry C. Van Dyke, to whom Calvin's God is "a nightmare horror of monstrosity, infinitely worse than no God at all." "To worship such a God," he says, "is to worship an omnipotent devil." Similarly thought the Assembly, and made such changes in the Westminster Confession as would, if made in 1815 by the New England Congregationalists, have made their segregation into two mutually distrustful and oppugnant bodies almost or quite impossible. When we consider how frail the formal recession from their traditional symbols by ecclesiastical bodies generally is compared with the large utterance of men's personal talk, we may begin to understand how extended and how general the departure in the unbroken orthodox communions is from those conceptions of religion which were intolerable for Channing's mind and heart.

What Channing's part has been in this amelioration of dogma only the most foolhardy will presume to say. To overrate it is an easy matter, such immense coöperation has it had from the scientific and other intellectual forces of the period. Moreover, many of the theological and critical positions taken up so cheerfully by liberal Orthodoxy are far in advance of those to which Channing attained with much hesitation and anxiety.

Here, certainly, he has not been the forerunner. On critical lines there has been obvious gain on his naïve subordination of the irrational and dissuasive parts of the Bible to those which were for him rational and engaging. On theological, and more especially Christological, lines, the gain has been less obvious. The Christology of Fairbairn or Gordon, for example, has less intellectual seriousness and logical coherency than the inherited creed; less than the Arian mechanism with which Channing set out or the Socinian story-book contrivance, — a titular sonship bestowed on the good human Jesus as a reward of merit; far less than the humanitarian conception to which he finally arrived.

But none of these considerations touches the heart of Channing's prophetical relation to the generations that have intervened between his time and ours and to those which are now pressing forward into life. To his contemporaries he was a distinguished theologian; seen from our present vantage, his theology is the least part of him. Our present orthodoxy might have adopted much more of his opinion, or have advanced much more from his positions, and his main significance would not be seriously changed. For this inhered in his moral inversion of the Copernican astronomy. This world was central to his religious aspiration. He preached the kingdom of heaven *upon earth.* Not to save men's souls for heaven or from hell was the conscious purpose of his ministry, once he had come into clear self-consciousness, but to save

men in their physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual entirety, from foolish wasting of their powers, and for the upbuilding on the earth of a divine society. Nothing has been more characteristic of the last half century of religious thought than the shifting of its centre of gravity from another world to this. Theology has come to sociology as John the Baptist came to Jesus in the New Testament legend, saying, "Thou must increase and I must decrease;" and such has been the working out. No one pretends that all this has been an effect of which Channing was the cause, but Channing's anticipation of it all was wonderful. The new social enthusiasm was all there in his brooding mind and yearning heart. All that we have seen of this has been the progressive realization of his hope and dream.

Moreover, he has been the critic equally with the prophet of the new social spirit. He was not of those who believe that the kingdom of heaven comes entirely without observation. He fancied great improvements possible in the social organization. Perhaps he looked with a too sanguine hope to such experiments as those at Mendon and Red Bank and Brook Farm. But he never made the mistake which is so common, — he never imagined that an ideal society could be constructed out of bad men or men indifferently good. He knew that, given the most perfect social organization, with men as they are now, the joint result would not be anything deserving thanks and praise. He

would make the perfected individual the corner-stone of the divine society. Only as men are clean, healthy, intelligent, educated, virtuous, can they, in their combination and cohesion, shape that better social state which is the desired of all nations.

But the main significance of Channing was not exhausted by his translation of the great salvation out of the language and spirit of other-worldliness into the language and spirit of social regeneration. Equally inherent in it was his extremely practical doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. What made this doctrine a reality for Channing, when for many others it was a mere form of words, was his vital appropriation of its corollary — the Brotherhood of Man. Here was the religious sanction of his social spirit. All his social aspirations, — for improving the condition of the poor; for elevating the laboring classes; for universal education; for the emancipation of the slave; for the wiser treatment of criminals; for the cure of intemperance; for the abatement of money-worship and the partisan spirit, — all his aspirations directed to these ends went back into his consciousness of human brotherhood, and fed their roots upon his "one sublime idea" of the greatness of the human soul. This greatness was a possibility that must not be jeopardized by ignorance and sin; this brotherhood a pledge of mutual reverence and forbearance, and of helpfulness in every strait.

It must be confessed that Channing's vision was

not so prophetic on this line as on that of social regeneration inhibiting the traditional scheme of other-world salvation. The right of the strong nations to subject the weak to their good pleasure; the conviction that "the black, brown, yellow, and dirty-white people *will have to go*," and with these the population of the slums; a certain hard complacency in the presence of infernal cruelty whether at home or in our insular possessions; the flouting of our traditional ideals of popular rights as sentimental constructions for which we have no longer any use, — these are so many aspects of our time that do not so much indicate our response to Channing's spirit as the need of our return to him for guidance in the doubtful way. Never at any time have we been more plainly called to hold up our social, political, and individual life to the searching light of his clear eyes than in this immediate present, when a certain scepticism of human brotherhood has not only entered into minds naturally inclined to such scepticism, but has infected many whom we imagined born for other things.

There is encouragement for us when we turn from this aspect of contemporary life to that presented by its intellectual conditions. The ethics of intellect is much better understood and much more happily exemplified than it was in Channing's time. We are far enough from realizing that spiritual freedom, the high thought of which enraptured Channing's soul, and became psalm and prophecy upon his lips, but we cannot read his

strong denunciations of contemporary bigotry and persecution, or his passionate indictments of the sectarian spirit, without being assured that we have made some advance in these particulars; yes, a good deal. There is much more freedom of theological opinion than there was formerly, much less disposition to measure men's characters by theological standards; though it must, perhaps, be granted that the more genial temper has the defect of its quality, — a slackened earnestness; a sentiment of indifference in the presence of religious ideas and ideals.

In no respect was Channing more prophetic of the changes that have been developed since his death than in the decay of the sectarian spirit. Could he return to us, he would not appreciate as would Benjamin Franklin our steam engines and telegraphs; he would be painfully suspicious of our enormous wealth, and even more so of our great fleet of warships and the strengthening of our military arm; but he would be delighted with our Church of the Divine Amenities, the kindly sympathies of so many preachers and laymen of the different sects, the coöperation of these sects on many lines of social help, the exchange of pulpits across sectarian lines of demarcation, our parliaments of religion, and our congresses which bring together, for the friendly interchange of opinion and comparison of purpose, Christians of every name, and with these the Jew, the Buddhist, the Brahmin, the Mohammedan, —

> Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
> Distinct in individualities.

And should he, remaining with us for a little time, come, on a day, somewhere, upon

> A temple, neither Pagod, Mosque, nor Church,
> But loftier, simpler, always open-door'd
> To every breath from heaven, and Truth and Peace
> And Love and Justice came and dwelt therein, —

he would go in and feel as much at home as any one of the more recent times, so open was his mind, so given to hospitality, such joy had he in finding the good man wearing the Presbyterian blue, the Quaker drab, or some other color that he could not quite approve.

It is impossible for any one to study Channing long and carefully and not feel that if, from any height, he sees and knows the present order of the world, he finds the realization of his hopes far less in the spread of those particular opinions which received his intellectual assent than in the softening of sectarian animosities, the diminution of sectarian zeal, the kinder mutual regards of different bodies of believers, the enlarging sympathy of the world's great religions, and the labors of those men who are doing what they can to lessen party spirit, to improve social conditions, and to uphold, in spite of proud contempt and rancorous opposition, the things that make for peace.

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